

VARIOUS APPROACHES FOR S.Y. AGNON'S  
STORIES - AGNON INTERPRETATIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the ways in which the works of the Hebrew writer S.Y. Agnon (a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature) have been or may be interpreted. Seven of Agnon's stories (Ha-Adonit veba-Rokhel, Agadat ha-Sofer, Hupat Dodim, Bi-demi Yameha, Shevu'at Emunim, Edo ve-Einam and Temol Shilshom), the summaries of which are given in Chapter 2, have been examined closely both in their content and in their interpretation. These interpretations have been divided into five aspects, appearing in Chapter 3, and are as follows: Jewish religion and tradition; historical and social changes; psychology; mythos and poetry; and symbolism. An evaluation and criticism has been made of nine of Agnon's interpreters: Y. Bahat, A.J. Band, B. Hochman, B. Kurzweil, S.Y. Penueli, D. Sadan, D. Stern, M. Tochner, and E. Zoref.

In the second part of the thesis there are some comparisons of the texts of the seven stories with some of Robert Graves's mythological theories as they appear in his books 'The White Goddess' and 'The Greek Myths'. The subjects for the comparisons are: The God of the Year; the Myth of the Twins; and Various Aspects of the Great Goddess. The purpose of this part of the work is to propose a new approach to the interpretation of Agnon, based on his instinctive inclination towards Nature religion and the Mother Goddess. Finally there is a list of abbreviations and a general bibliography of works on Agnon.

## FOREWORD

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1. INTRODUCTION
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## FOREWORD

There are many ways in which to deal with a literary work, and Agnon could boast of having been dealt with in quite a few of them. I hope I have succeeded in mentioning all of those that concern Agnon:

a) Literary Technique - structure and style, and the confrontation of form and content. This subject is used by many of Agnon's critics.<sup>1</sup>

Agnon is basically a story-teller, and even his great novels are just extended stories; the styles he uses vary greatly: from Biblical language, through Rabbinic, Mediaeval and Hasidic styles, up to the modern mixed Palestinian vernacular. Berdichevski, for instance, criticizes Agnon's use of Hasidic language for a tragic story (KB 276).<sup>2</sup> Symbolism, as a literary technique, sometimes looks like an obsession with Agnon, and some critics, like Tochner and Stern, exploit it to the full. On the other hand Kurzweil stresses with regard to Agnon that "the artistic value is not due to intellectual design".

b) Literary Categorization - the nature of the works and their purpose. Few of Agnon's critics concern themselves with categorizing his writings. Band, however, divides all Agnon's works into very specific categories (Gothic stories, folklore, fantasies, love stories etc.), though in my opinion he is not always very accurate in his task (s. below Chapter 5).

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<sup>1</sup> Band, Katzenelson, Kremmer, Kurzweil, Landau, Moqed, Penueli, Qaru, Sadan, Shaqed, Tochner, Tsemah, Zoref.

<sup>2</sup> A key to the abbreviations appears at the end.

As to the nature of the work, critics generally agree that Agnon does not confine himself to mere description of what he sees around him; nor does he try to convey a definite message, unless it is one of uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> As Hochman puts it, Agnon's works reflect his quest, a solution to an unbearable situation of life, which he cannot define himself.

c) Literary Background<sup>2</sup> - Agnon's literary background was quite extensive, starting with Biblical and post-Biblical studies, continuing in Mediaeval and later Jewish works, to modern European literature. Some parts of his works (episodes in SE, and the figure of Gadi'el) go back to early Jewish traditions, while in others critics find evidence of Freud and Kafka. Gertner describes how Agnon builds up his own homilies and legends on the model of the traditional ones (Tar 13). On the other hand Band finds, in what he calls Agnon's "Gothic" stories, the influence of German and Norse mythologies, or at least their atmosphere, as for instance in AR (s. below Chapter 7:III).

d) Linguistic Analysis - Agnon's language is complex and not uniform. Sadan notes the hesitation of critics to research into it, and indeed there is not much found on this subject.<sup>3</sup> Mansour has dedicated a whole book (LA) to the study of Agnon's language; otherwise there are articles, most of which appear in one book (LS). Rabin deals with Agnon's language from the standpoint of a linguist, i.e. he does not want to learn about Agnon through his language, but about the Hebrew language through Agnon's writings. Schachevitz deals with Agnon's punctuation, and Sadan with his use of traditional phrases with individualistic alterations.

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<sup>1</sup> Bahat, Band, Barzel, Katz, Y., Kurzweil, Orent, Penueli, Sadan.

<sup>2</sup> Band, Gertner, Moqed, Sadan, Shalom, Shebid.

<sup>3</sup> Goshen-Gottstein, Mansour, Rabin, Sadan, Shachevitz.

e) Comprehensive Analysis of separate works. This has been done by many of Agnon's critics.<sup>1</sup> A great number of Agnon's stories are subject to such an analysis, but some of them (EE, SE, TS), by reason of their importance and complexity, much more so than others.

f) The author himself - as a person and an artist - and his background. It is impossible to separate Agnon, the person and artist, from his background as a traditional Jew, a modern European, and a Zionist; and many a critic makes it a subject for his comments.<sup>2</sup> This aspect is connected with the idea in section b) of Agnon's quest for the unattainable.

The present work does not concern itself with most of the above-mentioned subjects. Neither literary structure and style, nor linguistic analysis, nor literary categorizing, nor the nature and purpose of Agnon's works have been touched upon. This work purports to deal with the ways in which Agnon has been interpreted, and as such it takes into consideration literary and personal background and some artistic points which will become clear during the course of the work.

Agnon is sometimes a most enigmatic writer, and some of the well known Hebrew literary critics have tried to interpret him in various ways. I intend to present and explain these ways, in general and as applied to some specific stories; and to add my own "interpretation of Agnon" at the end of this work.

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I wish to thank the people who were of great help to me in this work: Dr. M. Gertner, my supervisor, who guided me in the

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<sup>1</sup> Bahat, Band, Goldberg, Even, Halkin, Kurzweil, Kremmer, Levinger, Penueli, Sadan, Stern, Urbach, Tochner, Zoref.

<sup>2</sup> Barzel, A., Bahat, Band, Haberman, Horvitz, R., Goldberg, Kurzweil, Penueli, Qariv, Sadan, Tochner, Tsemah, Zoref.

obstacled way of a scholarly work; Miss Penelope Murphy, who corrected my English and helped me to present my ideas in a coherent way; and my father, Mr. E. Bar-Haim, who helped me in obtaining from Israel a great part of the material which was not available in London.

## PART I

### AGNON AND HIS INTERPRETERS

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is strange that such a work as the present one could be written; that a modern writer should be interpreted in much the same way as the Bible was by the ancient Jewish and Christian sages; and that in rather a similar way messages would be found in him which possibly had not been put there intentionally.

Agnon is not an instructor as the writers of the Bible were, and his work has no definite purpose; he is a "mere" story-teller, trying somewhat unsuccessfully to answer the questions life has posed for him. He loves playing with riddles and using symbols, thus supplying plentiful material for puzzle-solvers; he is, however, also a poet who uses poetic language and motifs not readily understood for the rational critic. Questions like "What is the psychological reason for Isaac Kummer's death?" (Temol Shilshom); "Why has Shoshanah Ehrlich a sleeping sickness?" (Shevu'at Emunim) and "Why is Gemulah a sleep-walker?" (Edo ve-Einam); or "Who is the mysterious Lady living in the forest and devouring her husbands?" (Ha-Adonit voha-Rokhel) crop up whenever one reads Agnon. No wonder so many of the Hebrew literary critics have tried, and are still trying, to solve them.

It is natural that Agnon's interpreters should not usually agree as to the solutions for his riddles, but find them each after his or her own heart; this disagreement forms the basic idea of the present thesis. The analysis of the discrepancies in interpretations of Agnon could have been made in one of the two following ways: examining the interpretations of various stories; or studying the different interpreters, their methods and attitudes.

I find both these ways unsatisfactory. On the one hand a great number of Agnon's stories have been interpreted. On the other, there are many critics who have written not more than an article, a passage, or even one line by way of interpreting Agnon, but whose comments are too important to be omitted. Both ways would have demanded too many details for this kind of work, and would have led to much confusion of ideas. However, had I cut the material to size, it would have been too much one-sided as a result.

The solution was to choose a third way, that of categorizing the mass of interpretations according to the ideas behind them, or as I have called them, "aspects of interpretations". I have found four such general ideas, which may in turn be sub-divided, and a fifth, which may be more aptly described as a method, for it is the use of symbols as a basis for interpretation. The four main aspects of the interpretations of Agnon, as I see them, are: I Jewish Religion and Tradition; II Historical and Social Changes; III Psychology; IV Mythos, poetry, art and nature.

The first aspect is naturally the most important, not only because of the Jewish background of Agnon and of most of his stories, but also because of the Jewish interest of his critics. This interest goes so far as to lead some interpreters to ascribe a Jewish character or ideas to stories which other interpreters find as remote from Judaism as possible. SE is one such controversial story, as seen from different standpoints by Sadan and Band, for instance: the former finds nothing but Jewish ideas and motifs in it, while the latter comments on its non-Jewish background and its general human problems.

The second aspect is important, but not as widely used as the first, probably because of the particular Jewish interest of Agnon's interpreters, as mentioned above. The Judaic aspect much depends of course on the historical one, as the latter is the cause of many disturbances in the former.

The psychological aspect is complicated. Most of the interpreters use it in connection with the first or second aspects, i.e. they think that the psychological problems of Agnon's characters depend on their being Jews, or on their being the product of the 20th century. Others connect the psychological aspect with the poetic one, using a mixture of terms which makes their allocation to one or other of the sections difficult. (This difficulty has caused some interpretations to be mentioned more than once in this work.) None of Agnon's interpreters is very learned in psychology, and a well defined, independent, psychological analysis of his work is conspicuous by its absence (unless one exists somewhere without my knowledge of it).

The fourth aspect is a compound of some four sub-sections, which are too small each to form a section on its own; they all, however, indicate Agnon's natural poetic inclination, and the conflict between the Jew and the poet in him. In my opinion this aspect is second in importance to the Judaic one, though most interpreters do not consider it as such. (It must be emphasised that the categorizing of interpretations is my own; interpreters on the whole present a mixture of ideas, and it was my task to separate and define them.)

Symbolism, as I have said, is more a method than an aspect of interpretation, and in it all the four aspects mentioned above may be found. It follows that a motif may symbolize different ideas according to the different interpreters using it for their own purpose of interpretation. For example, while from the viewpoint of Jewish tradition water may mean the Torah, mythologically it means femininity, or the Mother Goddess, and consequently its psychological implication may indicate a tendency towards the Oedipus complex or it may simply mean the unconscious. Symbolism should not be confused with allegory. The latter is applied to a story as a whole, while the former is applied to separate motifs,

words, names etc. It happens sometimes, though, that a story seems to an interpreter to be wholly composed of symbols, and interpreting all of them may present a full allegorical picture.

In the scope of this work it was impossible to include examples from all of Agnon's stories which have been interpreted, and for the sake of clear comparisons seven stories have been chosen. The summaries of these stories appear in the next chapter, before the analysis of the actual interpretations.

To complete the picture nine of Agnon's interpreters, each of whom has published a book on Agnon, have been chosen to be subjected to summing up and criticism. It should be stressed that this work is by no means intended to be comprehensive and conclusive, as such a work would have required a few hundred pages.



## 2. THE STORIES

Out of some hundred and seventy stories and four full-size novels written by Agnon I have chosen seven, six stories and a novel, which are dealt with often enough by Agnon's interpreters and about which I myself have something to say. Besides the novel 'Temol Shilshom' (TS), three of the stories are quite short: 'Ha-Adonit veba-Rokhel' (AR), 'Agadat ha-Sofer' (AS), and 'Hupat Dodim' (HD); the other three are much longer: 'Edo ve-Einam' (EE), 'Shevu'at Emunim' (SE), and 'Bi-Demi Yameha' (BY). TS, inspite of being a volume of some six hundred pages, may still be considered a story, for the essence of it is but a short episode in the life of its hero; the rest is a very elaborate background and commentary by the author.

Here in short is the content of each of the seven stories which serve as examples for interpretations of Agnon:

Ha-Adonit veba-Rokhel ("The Lady and the Pedlar") (KS IV, p.92)

Helene, the Lady

Yosef, a Jewish pedlar

Yosef the pedlar is a wanderer, going more or less aimlessly from one place to the other in his effort to sell his ware. One day he comes to a forest in a region unknown to him. Inside the forest he arrives at a house where the Lady, Helene, lives. He tries to sell her a hunting knife but she sends him on his way. He, however, loses his way in very bad weather and returns to the house, this time to be invited in reluctantly. Yosef becomes a servant to the Lady, does repairs in the house and sleeps in the barn. Slowly he betters his position, until he ends up in Helene's bed. Yosef wonders at the Lady's living on her own, and persistently demands to know whether she is married and where her husband is. At first she teases him in answer to his questions; but later

on she tells him that she has eaten all her former husbands. She is never seen to eat or drink, and he suspects that she may be telling the truth when she says that she eats human flesh and drinks human blood. After a while Yosef removes his bed to another place, and once, when he wants to say a Jewish prayer, he goes out because there is an icon of Jesus in the room. When he returns, he finds that the Lady has tried to kill him with the hunting knife he had sold her; when she has found that he was not there, she has thrust the knife into her own body. She remains ill for a few days; then one day she tries to bite Yosef and suck his blood, but she finds it too cold. Then she dies and he tries to bury her, but is unable to do so because the ground is frozen; so he wraps her body and puts it on the roof where the birds pick at it. Yosef then resumes his journey.

Agadat ha-Sofer ("The Legend of the Scribe") (KS II, p.131)

Rafael, a sofer (scribe)

Miriam, his wife

I would like to point out that there is little of a story here, more a state of affairs. The events are as follows: Rafael and Miriam marry; they have no children; Miriam dies; Rafael writes a scroll of Law in her memory and dies when finishing it.

The great part of the story is the life of the married couple, Rafael and Miriam; and how their purity and over-sanctity hinder their love. Rafael's job is to write phylacteries and mezuzot for the use of the Jewish community, and scrolls of the Law as special gifts for the community from people who have had no children and who want to leave something behind them when they die. To become pure enough for such a task Rafael prepares himself in this way: he rises at midnight to mourn the destruction of the Temple; then he studies and in the morning he dips himself in the miqveh (consecrated bath). After the morning prayer he

eats very little and works all day without going out or seeing people, thus avoiding all the seductions of everyday life. His wife Miriam does all the housework, and when she finishes she sits down to make garments for orphans, as a charm for conception. She has other charms, but none helps her, for Rafael's purity prevents him from approaching her: in the house there is a sacred picture on the eastern wall (a mizrah) with two lions and the name of God on it, and every time Rafael wants to make love to his wife, the picture comes between them and prevents it. After Miriam's death Rafael decides to write a scroll of the Law to immortalize her name. More than ever he keeps himself pure, and dips himself in the frozen river, thus weakening his body until he hardly has strength enough to finish the scroll. He finishes it, however, and when he does, he starts raving: he recalls how his engagement to Miriam came about: she was a little girl when she saw him on the Feast of the Law dancing with the scroll and approached to kiss it; her candle burned his garment, and as an answer to his father's claim for compensation, the rabbi decided that they should become engaged. Now Rafael, in his hallucinations, sees Miriam in her wedding dress and he takes the scroll and starts to dance with it, while other ghostly people dance around Miriam. At the end he falls dead, covered with her white dress.

Hupat Dodim ("Lovers' Canopy") (KS III, p.429)

Yohanan, a grave-watcher

Tsilah, a young girl

The dead girls

The townspeople

The mourning girl

(I have not counted other characters in the story who are not referred to by any of Agnon's interpreters.)

A recurrent theme in HD is description of the change of seasons, which corresponds to the chronological order of the story, and in this order it should be summarized. Yohanan, as his trade demands, lives in the cemetery. His life is described by Agnon as follows:

"At the heat of the day he goes out to the Field of Life; under pear and apple trees he lies and finds rest in their shadow."

At the beginning of the story it is summer, and when Yohanan goes to town to buy provisions,

"the sun burns fiercely, the town is all day in fever... air has vanished from the land and there is no wind for breathing";

and at night the dead girls rise from their graves to dance.

Once when he is in town he sees Tsilah, who is the sister-in-law of the grocer. She gives Yohanan a honey-cake, whereupon the grocer jokingly prophesies her death by saying that everybody should be nice to the grave-watcher so that his own grave would be well guarded. Yohanan sees Tsilah again in the autumn, on the Feast of the Willows, when he is taking part in a great feast of the undertakers; Tsila is one of the serving women. Then the winter comes, first with rains, then it snows. Some events happen then, which are connected with death: a child dies; Yohanan saves a dog from being buried in the snow; a girl roams the place, weeping for her dead lover, etc. In the frozen nights Yohanan walks among the graves, singing to himself.

When the winter is over Yohanan falls ill and yearns for death. Tsilah also falls ill, and when she dies the other dead girls come to meet her; after her burial they arrange a wedding for her and Yohanan. When the spring arrives and the snow melts, Yohanan also dies.

Bi-Demi Yameha ("In the Prime of her Life") (KS III, p.5)

Mintz, a merchant

Leah, his wife

Tirtsah, their daughter

Mazal, a former suitor of Leah's

The Gottliebs

Mintchi, wife of one of the Gottliebs and a friend of Leah's

Landau, a suitor of Tirtsah's

The old nurse, a dream apparition of Tirtsah

Leah's parents

Various other people

The story begins with the death of Leah, and then flashes back to the relations between Leah and Mazal. It may be better to tell it here in chronological order. Mazal, a poor scholar, happens to arrive at Leah's town and is a guest at her parents' house. He falls in love with Leah, who also loves him, but her father finds her a rich husband, Mintz, who would be able to take care of her, as her health is usually poor. This hurts Mazal greatly, and he remains a bachelor until the time of the beginning of the story.

Leah dies when Tirtsah is a school-girl; she meets Mazal for the first time when her father asks him to compose the inscription on Leah's grave-stone. There is a rather long description of Tirtsah's studies at school, with a private teacher and with a religious teacher ("melamed"). In the holidays Tirtsah goes to stay with Mintchi and there she learns about the love of her mother and Mazal; she also hears about the strange similarity of the Gottlieb twins (the Gottliebs, Mintchi's husband and his twin brother, do not really belong to the story; their importance is only in their being indistinguishable from each other, a fact which reflects the strange relationship of Mintz and Mazal, who are much the same in many

aspects in spite of being so different from each other, one a scholar and the other a merchant).

At the age of sixteen Tirtsah leaves school and goes to a seminary for women teachers, where Mazal is a teacher. She approaches him in a strange way, and has hallucinations concerning him. At that time the matchmaker of the town tries to match her with the rich lad Landau, who writes her love letters and who entertains her all through the winter. But in the spring Tirtsah meets Mazal again, in the forest, after which she falls ill. During her illness she announces her engagement to Mazal, and her illness becomes critical when she hears nothing from him. In view of these happenings Mazal agrees to marry Tirtsah. The story ends with a picture of Tirtsah expecting a child and Mintz and Mazal sitting with her in Mazal's house; they look so alike that they remind her of the Gottliebs.

Shevu'at Emunim ("Betrothal Oath") (KS VII, p.216)

Jacob Rechnitz, a young scientist

Shoshanah Ehrlich, Jacob's childhood friend

The Consul, Shoshanah's father

Gertrude, Shoshanah's mother

Jacob's parents

The six Jaffa girls: Leah, Rachel, Asenat, Rayah, Mirah, Tamar

The Baron, a neighbour of the Consul in the Jaffa hotel

To judge from its scope, SE is a novel more than any of Agnon's full-size volumes, for it deals with the whole course of Jacob's life from childhood to (seemingly near) marriage, though of course in a booklet of eighty pages there is not much room for many details. As a matter of fact the story dwells on a few stages in Jacob's life, about which Agnon tells in detail and which will be mentioned here. (Even in this compact volume Agnon finds room for side-issues like the political situation

concerning Palestine, concerning which the interpreters find nothing much to say and so they will not be mentioned.)

The first (chronologically, though not in this order in Agnon's telling of the story) stage we hear of in Jacob's life is in Vienna, where he lives as a child with his mother and father in the vicinity of the "palace" of the Consul Ehrlich; he is in the habit of playing with the little girl Shoshanah in the Consul's garden and she keeps him to herself, without letting any of the other girls play with him. That is the time when they cut a lock of each other's hair, burn it, eat it and swear their oath of faithfulness. One of Jacob's memories from that time is how Shoshanah used to run after butterflies and tie garlands of flowers on her head; and once she jumped into the pool and rose again looking like a mermaid with her hair dripping water and covered with seaweeds. Agnon describes how good Shoshanah's parents are to Jacob, and especially Gertrude, who loves him and gives him presents "which are needed and there is nothing shameful in them". Jacob loves Gertrude with a special kind of love, which is probably more spiritual than physical and "cannot be in any way explained as having a natural cause".

Next, Jacob goes to high-school with the help of the Consul, and the boy and his parents have to move house because of his father's money troubles. Shoshanah is busy with her own occupations as is "the wont of the daughters of the rich", and they see each other only once a month and on Shoshanah's birthdays. Then Gertrude falls ill, Shoshanah is sent to another town and Jacob sees the Consul only twice a year. Jacob finishes high-school and goes to university. A turning point in his mental attitude to life is when he hears of Gertrude's death.

An interesting motif in the story is Jacob's profession

and how he comes to choose it. It seems that at first he studies "all sciences, especially natural sciences". One night he has a dream about the sea and the moon, and decides he wants to do something which is connected with the sea. He first tries to be a doctor but cannot bear the sight of an anatomical operation. Then he decides to do research in seaweeds, in which he succeeds very well: one of the plants is later called after his name and he is invited, towards the end of the story, to be a professor in America.

Finishing university, Jacob finds himself going to Palestine, at the time when the Jewish settlement there is very scanty. He remains in Jaffa and becomes a teacher of German and Latin, doing his researches in the Mediterranean in his free time. In Jaffa Jacob makes friends with six girls: Leah, heavily built and not very handsome, "older than her friends but her eyes are young and good angels dwell in them"; Rachel, "lovelier than Leah, erect as a palm-tree, her eyes are always cold"; Asenat, tall and very attractive, clever but cold and rejecting; Rayah, plain, silly and selfish, but with a sharp sense of humour; Mirah, "more agile than any of the other girls in Jaffa", quick and friendly, loved by everybody; Tamar, very young and pretty, with artistic inclinations. Most of the girls would like to marry Jacob, but he is in no hurry. Then the Consul comes with Shoshanah to Jaffa, after a tour in Europe and Africa, and Shoshanah renews their oath. But then she is stricken with a sleeping illness, becomes very apathetic, obsessed with death, and then loses consciousness altogether. The Consul prepares to leave for Vienna to consult a specialist, and the girls resume their relations with Jacob when the invitation to become a professor reaches him. Before he leaves for America he goes with the six girls for a walk on the beach, where the girls suggest a race, the winner of which would



marry Jacob and go with him. A miracle happens: Shoshanah suddenly appears running with the girls in her nightshirt, and she wins the race.

Edo ve-Einam ("Edo and Einam") (KS VII, p.343)

The narrator

Gamzu, a Jewish scholar

Gemulah, his wife

Ginat, a linguist

Gevaryah ben-Geu'el, Gemulah's father

Gadi ben-Ge'im, Gemulah's former suitor

The Greifenbachs

Aqiva Amrami

Ginther and his wife, a newly-wed couple

The story is an odd mixture of times and places, reality and dreams, and difficult to relate in chronological order. I shall try to tell the essence of its events without going into too many details, most of which are more reflections than happenings. It revolves around the Greifenbach's house, which the narrator occupies in the absence of its owners, who are away on holiday, in order to guard it from trespassers. There is another occupant, in a separate part of the house, who is Ginat, a scholar of old languages and cultures who has discovered the "Einamite hymns" and the ancient language of Edo. Aqiva Amrami and Ginther and his wife have nothing to do with the events of the story but are included in its interpretations.

It happens that when the narrator is in the Greifenbachs' house Gamzu comes there at night, looking for his wife who is a sleep-walker. Gamzu is a researcher in old Hebrew books; he met Gemulah on one of his journeys, when, while looking for such books, he was lost in a far and mysterious country. Gevaryah was the "chief" of the lost tribe of Gad living there,

which conducted a simple and natural life, and Gemulah was his twelve year old daughter. After an interval when Gamzu had gone to Vienna to cure his eyes, which had been injured during his travels, (succeeding to cure only one of them), he returned and during a festival he snatched Gemulah according to the tribe's custom, before Gadi managed to do so. Gamzu married Gemulah and then Gevayah died and Gamzu took the reluctant Gemulah back with him to Jerusalem. Since then she has been ill, and whenever the moon is full, she leaves the house to "walk on the roofs and sing Ydl ydl ydl wah pah mah".

Towards the end of the story the narrator and Gamzu find Gemulah in Ginat's room, where she sings to him that ancient song and he writes its description in his book. It seems that when Gamzu was in Vienna for the treatment of his eyes, Ginat had visited Gemulah's tribe in the disguise of a Jerusalemite sage named Gideon, and made a great impression on Gemulah; now that she has found him she wants to leave Gamzu, who "has not seen her flesh", and to go with Ginat. But he is not interested in her love and sends her back to her husband. Later on Gemulah goes again to walk on the roof, Ginat climbs up to rescue her and they both fall down and are killed. The story ends when the Greifenbachs return from their holiday in Europe, the narrator returns to his own home, and his family return from a visit to Gederah. Life is back to normal again with no more fantasies of moon-women.

Temol Shilshom ("Only Yesterday") (KS V)

Isaac Kummer, a pioneer in Palestine

Rabinovitz, a pioneer

Sonia, Rabinovitz's girl-friend

Leichtfuss, a painter

Shifrah, a Jerusalemite girl

R. Feish, her father  
 Rivqah, her mother  
 Rivqah's parents  
 R. Gronam, a religious fanatic  
 Bleukopf, an artist  
 Tosia, his wife  
 Balaq, a street dog  
 Lilith, an owl

It has already been said that in spite of its great bulk, TS is actually a story and not a real novel; there is more background and commentary than events, but my concern is with the latter and these I shall mention here.

Isaac is a youngish man who decides to leave his home in Galizia and go to Palestine as a pioneer. On the boat he meets an elderly couple, Shifrah's grandparents, who appear later in the course of the story. They, of course, do not go to Palestine to live but to die there. Arriving at Jaffa, Isaac finds life quite difficult, for he cannot find a job as a farm-hand, for Arab labour is cheaper. He becomes friendly with Rabinovitz, who finds a cure for hunger by working in a shop, and Isaac accidentally becomes a painter. In this job he meets Leichtfuss, who is not just a painter but an artist, whose father was a sculptor of Christian icons. Rabinovitz then leaves for Europe to learn his trade as a merchant, and his girl-friend Sonia befriends Isaac. She seduces him - she is his first ever girl-friend - and he plans to marry her. Soon she gets tired of him, for he is not as amusing as other people in Jaffa at that time.

Isaac feels it is high time he went to Jerusalem. He goes there and after a while he settles there and meets a different set of people: while Jaffa is mostly inhabited by socialistic, non-religious Jews, in Jerusalem there are

more idealistic, even fanatic people, both Zionists and religious Jews. First Isaac makes friends with Bleukopf the artist, whose inspiration is Tosia, his wife; but Bleukopf dies after a short while. Then, when doing his work as a painter in the closed quarter of "Hungarian houses" he meets again the couple he had met on the boat, and they invite him to the house of R. Feish, their son-in-law. Isaac meets Shifrah there, and falls in love with her, but R. Feish is a religious fanatic and he cannot stand Isaac's appearance without a beard and side-curls.

Painting one day in the Bukharian quarter, Isaac happens to see a street dog, and in a moment of folly he paints on his back the words "mad dog". Then he kicks him and the dog flees in pain. A great part of the book tells about the dog's wanderings in Jerusalem, his adventures and his reflections on life. At one stage somebody misreads the word for dog - kelev - as Balaq, and that is the name given to him. People think him to be a mad dog and drive him away from every place with stones and sticks. Once Balaq appears in front of R. Feish at night and frightens him so much that R. Feish has a fit of apoplexy; from then on he is paralyzed from head to toe, lies senseless and motionless in his bed. On another occasion the dog happens to be present at one of R. Gronam's gatherings, where he speaks vehemently against everyone and everything. When R. Gronam sees Balaq, he compares the present generation to a mad dog. Afterwards Balaq meets Lilith the owl, who tells him a moral story about the hyena who wanted eternal life and gained it by becoming a stuffed animal.

During R. Feish's illness, Isaac succeeds in encountering Shifrah and nearly tells her of his love for her. He then goes to Jaffa to make a final break with Sonia. Finding her quite indifferent to him, he does not even mention the subject, and after rather a long delay he returns to Jerusalem. Proposing

to Shifrah, he succeeds in persuading Rivqah that they need him and his help with R. Feish's illness, and she agrees to the match after seeing some people from Isaac's home town who vouch for him. Some days after the wedding Balaq is seen running about in the Hungarian quarter; Isaac pacifies the frightened people, saying that the dog is quite healthy and that it is he who wrote the words on his back. But it seems that in his wanderings the dog has become ill and mad; he bites Isaac, who falls ill with rabies, and dies a foul death after some weeks. The drought, which has threatened Jerusalem for some time, breaks with Isaac's death, and rains fall, being long overdue.

### 3. ASPECTS OF INTERPRETATION

#### I JEWISH RELIGION AND TRADITION

It is only natural that most interpretations of Agnon are based on Jewish religion and on traditional sources; Agnon was deeply rooted in Judaism, and the experiences of the Jewish town, home and school (Beit Midrash) had a life-long influence on him. Moreover, if the poet, as Jung says, is as open as the child to the collective unconscious of his race, both to absorb and to express it (AP 106)<sup>1</sup>, then Agnon, recognized as a natural poet by himself and by most of his critics, would always be open for the innermost life of Judaism.

But Agnon was also a man of his times, and these times were full of disturbances and wars which caused the uprooting and annihilation of many Jewish congregations and the disillusion of many Jews. Add to this disillusion Agnon's yearning for nature and natural poetry and love - opposition to which qualities is firmly expressed in the Talmud - and his ambivalent attitude towards a scholarly approach to Jewish studies, and you get the complex of feelings on which many interpreters base their arguments.

From the Judaic point of view I have found three different kinds of approach to Agnon's stories used by his interpreters: 1. The "pure and simple" view; 2. the allegorical approach; 3. elaborations on the conflicts in Agnon.

1. In the "pure and simple" approach every word in the story examined is taken at its face value; no irony or double meaning is found. Interpreters who use this kind of approach see Agnon's stories as modelled on the best of traditional Jewish literature, with a complete faith in God and with no

conflict whatsoever. Only a few of Agnon's interpreters have this simple approach to his stories; among them, for instance, is Qeshet, who sees in AS

"not a story but a picture of admiration for the chastity and holiness of the Jewish believer, the purity of family life, the dumb love for the pious wife; (in short) religious humanism" (MMA 374).<sup>2</sup>

Dumb love seems to be one of the characteristics of young Jewish people who are not supposed to have such a profane feeling. Thus Lifshitz finds a "love of dumb people" also in HD (KL II 207)<sup>3</sup>. He describes AS as

"the Song of Songs of Jewish love" (ib. 214),

while Brenner says about AS that

"it flows from Jewish origin, and the poet is immersed in it and is sanctified by it" (KBr VIII 416).<sup>4</sup>

None of these interpreters feels the irony which both Band and Penueli find in AS (s. below). In the same way Qeshet describes BY as

"full of Jewish piety"

and the heroine Tirtsah

"is a reflection of pious mothers of ancient saints (Tsadiqim)" (MMA 374);

all this in opposition to all the conflicts other interpreters find in this story, and in spite of Tirtsah's outrageous behaviour in wooing Mazal.

2. In the extreme opposite to the "pure and simple" theory is the allegory; the former takes every word literally with no questions asked; the latter questions every word and symbol and sometimes understands the text in its contradicting meaning (s. below "Dinah Stern" in Chapter 4). The principle of the allegory is that every character in the story symbolizes a certain idea; but there is a difference of opinion as to what idea each character represents. Two such allegories are applied to the story of SE, one classical in its simplicity,

the other as complicated as possible.

The first, classical, allegory is by Qariv (SEL 102-108)<sup>5</sup>; according to him the story goes as follows: Jacob, the hero, represents Agnon himself, and Jacob's work with his poetical seaweeds symbolizes Agnon's creation in stories and legends (SEL 105). In his early life Jacob is described as living with his father, who represents the older generation (SEL 104). This generation is still leaning on the Jewish way of life, symbolized by the Consul and his family: the Consul is world Jewry with its traditional life; his wife Gertrude is the Jewish town; their daughter Shoshanah is all that is beautiful in Judaism: Sabbaths and Holy Days and the figure of the Shekhinah of God; the Consul's palace symbolizes the Beit Midrash; and the pool in the garden is the treasure of Jewish lore which Agnon-Jacob has neglected for the sake of European literature (SEL 104). The hero has left this traditional life and tries to find satisfaction in every-day pleasures, symbolized by the six Jaffa girls (SEL 106); but the end of the story marks his happy return to his origin.

No allegory can be more complicated than Stern's on SE (a book of 100 pages<sup>6</sup> is dedicated to this purpose), and her overall idea of the story is quite different from that of Qariv's. According to her the author is not involved in the events, represented by one of the characters, as in Qariv's approach; here he acts as an observer, actually almost like a Biblical prophet, and the story is used by him as a message and a warning for those Jews who dare to deviate from traditional life (BL 100). Most of Stern's ideas concerning the symbolism of SE are based on Jewish literary sources: the Bible, the Talmud and the homilies. Thus Jacob is the classical symbol of the people of Israel, in his still heathen,



pre-consecrated figure; in the story he has returned to his old mischievous ways of idol-worship and interest in foreign culture, symbolized by the six Jaffa girls (BL 17). As mentioned many times in the Bible, here again he has forsaken his God, who is represented by the combined figures of Shoshanah (the Shekhinah - BL 60), the Consul (God of Justice - BL 52), Gertrude (God of Mercy - BL 57), and the Baron (the Judging God - BL 65). A marked difference between Qariv and Stern in their approach to SE is seen in the way each ends his or her allegory: according to Qariv Shoshanah's winning the race shows that it is a happy ending - the return to Jewish tradition (SEL 107); according to Stern Jacob's closing his eyes during the race is a sign of death, both for himself (i.e. for the Jewish people) and for Shoshanah (i.e. its God). The winning of the race is seen by her as the vengeance God is going to take on Israel (BL 86).

The allegorical idea appears also in Sadan in connection with HD (BQ 186-190)<sup>7</sup>, in which he sees Yohanan as a symbol for the people of Israel amongst the nations, with no home to live in but the grave. In Yohanan's attraction to Tsilah Sadan finds a symbol for the destined mutual belonging of Israel-God-Palestine-Torah (BQ 187). (According to Sadan clearer hints at this idea have appeared in Agnon's earlier version of the story, which was called Ha-Hupah ha-Shehorah - 'The Black Canopy'; these sections have been omitted from the present version.) But though Sadan calls it an allegory, he does not tell the story as such, as Qariv and Stern do.

3. Allegory is a matter of form, but it has a bearing on the content in that it changes the acting figures from particular people to general ideas. It still shows, however, the conflicts which bother the author, and so it is closer to the third part of this chapter than to the first (the "pure

and simple" approach). Conflicts are numerous in Agnon, and most interpreters base their interpretations on one or more of these conflicts. The main conflicts interpreters find in Agnon are as follows: Judaism and foreign culture; obsession with the past; tradition and love; pure belief and the study of Judaism; between man and God.

Most interpreters do not find it necessary to turn Agnon's stories into allegories in order to examine the conflicts appearing in them. One story besides SE which reflects the same problem of the meeting point of Jews with a foreign culture is AR; Bahat<sup>8</sup> comments that to regard this story as an allegory is to limit its scope - the symbols are not so straightforward as is demanded from symbols in an allegory (AH 124). Yosef the pedlar, for instance, symbolizes the Jewish people which is a guest at and seduced by the peoples of Europe, represented by the Lady Helene - according to Bahat, Band and Kurzweil. But there is a difference of opinions as to the outcome of their meeting: Band, comparing the Pedlar to Biblical Yosef, to the mediaeval Yosef dela-Reina, and to Yosef, father of Jesus, sees him as a saintly figure who cannot be tempted (NN 400).<sup>9</sup> Kurzweil understands the whole story as a conflict between Judaism and Christianity (MA 125)<sup>10</sup> (he has no explanation for the story's strange ending). According to Bahat, however, the events are past conflict because the Jew is quite ready to be seduced and forsake his own religion for the sake of worldly pleasures (AH 119).

Less bitter but probably more acute than the conflict between Judaism and foreign culture is that inside Judaism itself. Hochman and Fisch see Agnon's greatest problem as his obsession with the glorious past of the Jewish people, which, according to Fisch<sup>11</sup>, is at the same time a burden

on a man who lives in 20th century Europe (MI 123). This obsession with the past, according to many interpreters, is expressed in SE and in EE; in each case the poetical figure of the heroine represents the beauties of the traditions and culture of past generations of the Jewish people. Return to the past, however, is impossible, as is seen in Hochman's view of TS, for there Isaac Kummer dies exactly at the point of his return to the traditional way of life (FA 140)<sup>12</sup>, because this kind of life in the 20th century is nothing but death itself, like the existence of dead animals stuffed by the taxidermist. (This subject is elaborated on in the chapters on Psychology and on Mythology).

But while Hochman and Fisch see the values of physical beauty, poetry and love - some of the prime opponents of traditional Judaism - as belonging to the early existence of the Jewish people and lost in times past, Penueli and Kurzweil find the same values in modern life, where they are part of the general rebellion against traditional Jewish life of the past. Thus, though Kurzweil calls these values "archaic forces" symbolized, for instance, in the dog Balaq in TS, he at the same time notes that for Isaac, being of a traditional upbringing, these forces are dangerous, while they are harmless for Rabinovitz who is more modern in his attitude to life (MA 110). Penueli says plainly that any rebellion in Agnon is that of Love against the constrictions of traditional Judaism (YA 50)<sup>13</sup>.

The idea of a conflict between physical love and holy love of God is particularly stressed by Band in his comments on AS: he sees in this story an ironical attitude of Agnon towards the over-holiness of Rafael the Scribe, who in his abstinence from his wife transgresses the Biblical command of procreation (QQ 98)<sup>14</sup>. Far from being a picture of "the

purity of the Jewish family life" (s. above), if every Jew were to behave like Rafael there would soon be no Jewish families at all.

The problem of tradition versus "free" love (i.e. the freedom of a person to marry whomsoever he or she loves) seems to have been Agnon's own problem; so was the conflict between the pure faith in the Jewish religion versus its scholarly study - Agnon himself was well versed in Jewish studies. But he seems to have opposed particularly students of Judaism who have no religious feelings. The centre for interpreters' discussion of this subject is the story of EE, where the author seems to criticise sharply the two scholars, Ginat and Gamzu, who between them let all the beauty of the mysteries of Judaism be lost under the cold magnifying glass of the dissector. Thus Band sees the three main figures in the story as

"a three cornered pull: Ginat with his philosophical studies; Gamzu with his studies of traditional Jewish poetry; Gemulah as an incarnation of inspiration, poetry of the lost tribes, songs of joy, sorrows, nature, simpler age of the Bible" (NN 391).

(There is here a meeting point with the past again, besides a criticism of studying Judaism). In Tochner's interpretation the main idea is that Agnon opposes the studying of Judaism, especially of the mysteries of the Qabalah, which may cause madness and death, as it did to three of the four Talmudic Rabbis who "entered the Pardes". According to Tochner what Agnon says is that beliefs should be left unexplored, or they lose their charm and authenticity. That is why there was no consummation of the marriage of Gemulah and Gamzu - i.e. the Shekhinah of God and Israel, or else the pure faith and the study. Moreover, Gamzu's studies are the actual cause of Gemulah's illness; it started with her marrying him, who was not interested in her beauty but only in her history. The

objection of the author to Ginat, according to Tochner, is his studying on his own, contrary to the instructions of the Halakhah (PA 115, 120)<sup>15</sup>.

An interesting point in this conflict, as seen by Fisch, is that Agnon himself was interested in the study of Judaism and in the research into the past history of the Jewish people. That is why he makes Ginat's writings continue to exist after his death, in spite of his burning them - these values of the past should be preserved for future generations (MI 136).

One conflict which Band finds in Agnon and which most other interpreters ignore completely is that between Agnon and his own God, or the national God of Israel. This idea is expressed, according to Band, in TS, first by Balaq who "questions the divine justice" and then by the words of the narrator, who finds no justification for the punishment and death of Isaac on the brink of a happy new life with his young wife, in spite of his repentance (NN 417, 427, 445).

A comparison with the following chapters will show that Agnon's interpreters differ most in what they consider to be Agnon's position with regard to the Jewish tradition and religion, probably because most interpreters consider it the most important issue concerning Agnon.

## II HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES

The historical and social changes reflected in Agnon's stories and found there by his interpreters are mostly Jewish ones, but they depend on the changes occurring in Europe since the last part of the 19th century.

The situation in AR, as seen by Band and Kurzweil, is an early one, before such changes have started to take place: the story expresses the rootless wanderings of the Jews in Europe and their occasional assimilation - not just religious but also social - into the host country, whenever it is friendly enough (NN 400; MA 125). Bahat goes further with the suggestion that the Lady's unexplained death refers to the destruction of Europe in World War II (AH 123).

As with religion so with regard to social situation, the conflicts inside the society are more important than those with the outside world. Both Band and Kurzweil see BY in a secular light, not particularly Jewish. Band says that the conflict in BY occurs inside middle class society and against its conventions (NN 117). According to Kurzweil it is a clash of the individual with the society,

"a slow tumbling of the spiritual and social frame of traditional community resulting from the struggle towards a more individualistic approach to life."

He finds a development in this struggle in the fact that Tirtsah succeeds in attaining her goal by marrying Mazal, where her mother Leah has failed and had to submit to the tradition (MA 46-7). (In this case the tradition and the conventions depend much on religion; it is thus difficult to separate the two aspects of interpretation.)

Following the struggle for the freedom of the individual came national aspirations and Zionism. Agnon himself was

both a traditional Jew and a Zionist, and the conflict between religious people and Zionists, as well as inside a person who is both, is particularly apparent in his book TS. There are as many different ideas about TS as there are interpreters: Katz takes Isaac Kummer as an individual (presumably representing Agnon in some points) who has failed both as a pioneer and agriculturalist, and as a lover (MD 169).<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, according to Tochner Isaac symbolizes the struggling generation, with Balaq as its shattered consciousness (PA 63-71). Zoref sees Isaac as

"a mirror of the old (traditional) and the new (Zionist) settlements in Palestine, their inhibitions, problems, sorrows and joys" (IY 154);<sup>17</sup>

but Band, as in his interpretation of BY, detaches Isaac from Judaism by saying that he symbolizes the Western civilization in the late 30's and early 40's; the madness of this civilization is incarnated in the mad dog Balaq (NN 417). This detachment of Agnon from Judaism is found by Band also in SE, which according to him is

"an account and evaluation of the second Aliya, on personal and ideological bases" (NN 369);

"there is nothing in Jacob's or Shoshanah's background to connect them with Jaffa and its (Jewish) society" (NN 317).

On the other hand, he sees Jaffa as a fitting background for the story because of its non-Jewish associations - Jaffa was supposed to have been named after Japhet, who was the supposed ancestor of the Arian peoples; Band actually condemns the tendency of Jewish critics to find too many Jewish literary associations in Agnon (NN 381). It is a far cry from Qariv's and Stern's Jewish allegories of SE.

The problems of 20th century Jew both in Europe and in Palestine are seen by Fisch also in the story of EE, which he describes as full of

"complications of exile, National Home, modern Jew and 20th century man" (MI 31).

But according to Tochner the story of Gamzu in EE tells the whole history of the Jewish people from the occasion on Mount Sinai till the latest settlement in Palestine (PA 113). Tochner finds in this story two national motifs: the past unchangeable history, and the modern changing history (PA 108). As with Kurzweil's comment on BY, here also there is an inevitable connection with the Law and tradition, and so with the previous chapter about the Judaic aspect in interpreting Agnon.



### III PSYCHOLOGY

The psychological aspect of Agnon's interpretations is the most complicated, partly because the interpreters are literary people, not qualified psychologists (at least not to my knowledge); partly because psychology itself is an elusive subject, mixed on one side with conflicts of religion and society and on the other with Nature mythology. Jung has already built a whole system relating psychology to mythology, which can fit Agnon's work in many cases. But very little of it, or of any other systematic psychology, is used by his interpreters; they mostly use their own private ideas, which I shall try to present here as best I can. The definition of what is a psychological aspect of interpretation and what is not must naturally be my own.

I have counted seven psychological subject-groups used by the interpreters as bases for their dealings with Agnon's stories. These are: 1. love with its complications (eroticism, incest, etc.); 2. retreat to childhood or to the past, "return to the womb"; 3. manifestations of running away from life (dreams, substitutes for the real things); 4. various appearances of madness (lunatism, split personality, etc.); 5. home and homelessness; 6. matters of conscience (guilt, punishment and reward); 7. death, concrete or spiritual. If we take the subject-group which is used by the greatest number of interpreters with reference to Agnon's most "psychological" stories as indicative of the main psychological point of each such story we can see that the main theme of EE is madness; that of BY is love; the theme of SE is running away; and that of TS is conscience. A running up theme for TS would be madness; for SE love; and two for EE, love and homelessness. The agreement of the interpreters as to the problems of a certain

story depends, of course, on how clearly Agnon presents them; there is usually, however, not much agreement about Agnon's attitude towards those problems.

For three interpreters (Band, Bahat, Penueli) the love in BY between Tirtsah and Mazal appears to be a spiritual incest; Mazal, Leah's former lover, should properly have been Tirtsah's father. They differ, however, in what they see is the attitude of Agnon to such an unbearable situation: according to Band Agnon makes Tirtsah very young and innocent in order that she should not understand what she is doing (NN 118); it is well known that the innocent cannot sin. Penueli takes it that Tirtsah's love is too confused, for she feels she has to fulfill her mother's ambition, while she loves Mazal as her spiritual father - her confusion is stressed by the appearance of the identical twins who may symbolize the similarity of Mintz and Mazal (YA 38); for Tirtsah,

"the secret of her being is hidden in Mazal, and he is the solution to her own life" (YA 42).

And so she gets him, and loses interest, love loses its charm. For Bahat the solution for Tirtsah is a spiritual death (AH 48) - it is not clear whether the reason is that by marrying her "second father" she commits a mortal sin.

The problem of incest appears to some interpreters also in SE. Jacob knows the history of Shoshanah's parents better than she does, as though they were his own parents. So, according to Band, he sees her as his sister and marrying her would be an act of incest (NN 375). But for Stern this obscurity of parenthood makes them not brother and sister but one person (BL 71). Both Stern and Qariv avoid the problem of incest by allegorizing the story, so that the characters are not actual people but symbols.

Incest is only one of the problems involved in the love of Jacob and Shoshanah in SE. Tochner sees a hindrance to their

unification in the differences in class and education, but eternal love triumphs at the end (PA 190-191). Band also finds a happy end to the story: choosing between the double pull of Jaffa, the girls and his studies on the one side and Shoshanah, the oath and childhood memories on the other, Jacob accepts Shoshanah with the responsibility of "a higher human life" (NN 380).

Penueli separates Jacob's soul from his body; while the latter, in its maleness, is attracted by Tamar's beauty, the former is possessed by Shoshanah and her parents. Spiritual love holds him by buying and possessing, and thus it gets him at the end, by Shoshanah's winning the race (YA 62).

Love is probably the most important theme in Agnon's stories, and the most dealt with by his interpreters, be it just in a few words. Its course is never straight, but sometimes it takes the strangest of turns. Thus it appears in the "eternal" triangle of Gemulah, Gamzu and Ginat in EE. According to Shaqed<sup>18</sup> the story is about a struggle to conquer youth and beauty symbolized by Gemulah; Gamzu uses his logic, and fails, presumably because there is no logic in love, youth and beauty; Ginat succeeds through non-existence - you cannot get old if you cease to live (BM 329). Band sees the tragedy of the love between Gamzu and Gemulah as resulting from their being "mismated to begin with" (NN 385), while for Kurzweil it is a description of "Eros in the eyes of an old man" (MA 154).

A mismating exists also, according to Kurzweil, in AR, between the Gentile Lady and the Jewish Pedlar - their attitude to life and their aspirations are too different (MA 127); and the physical love of Rafael for his wife in AS is in conflict with his love for his God, as Penueli sees it (YA 24). Another love-complex is the love for the mother (Oedipus complex). This is one of Penueli's explanations of Jacob's love for Shoshanah in SE: having been in love with Gertrude he sublimates himself

to be in love with her daughter in order to "free his libido" (YA 122) - Gertrude was "like a mother" to Jacob; Penueli comments in addition that the sublimation is unsuccessful. In this light Katz sees Isaac's love for Shifrah in TS - she was the first woman to fit his mother's image and become a suitable wife for Isaac; his relation with Sonia is nothing but a "misunderstanding" (MD 167-8). Penueli and Hochman find in Isaac erotic desires; for the former they are symbolized in trains, and in the figures of the various dogs in the story (YA 38); for the latter they are expressed in "erotic day-dreams about Palestine" (FA 137).

Psychologically the love for the mother may be connected with the wish to return to the womb, to childhood (or in national terms: to the past). Band, for instance, says that

"Jacob's involvement and his personal identity depend only on his radical experiences in his childhood (NN 372-3): the Consul and his wife Gertrude, Shoshanah as a girl, the oath, the garden with the pool in it. Shoshanah actually represents the whole of these memories, and so creates an opposite pull to his life in Jaffa, his studies and his friendship with other girls" (NN 369).

Hochman puts it in these words:

"This obsession with the past is both personal and communal" (FA 2),

as Agnon's own problem. It is expressed as a wish to "return to the womb" in Jacob's mixing of Shoshanah with her mother as well as with his own mother at the end of the story (FA 179). Hochman on the whole seems to be obsessed with Agnon's obsession with the past, as he finds it in two other stories: in EE and in TS. Balaq in TS symbolizes, among the rest, Isaac's wish to return to the safety of the womb, i.e. of the traditional life of his childhood (FA 140), while the "obsession with the past" is a general theme of EE (FA 2). Bahat, rather more articulately, finds in Gamzu's half blindness a symbol for

"a yearning for beauty, insight, illusory life of the past" (AH 166),

which may again be a national aspect as well as personal.

Obsession with the past and the wish to return to the womb are one form of a fear of life and the wish to run away from it. In its psychological aspect (it can also appear as mythic-poetic) this theme in its various forms (dreams, substitutes, etc.) is found by five interpreters (Kurzweil, Sadan, Penueli, Zoref, Stern) only in one story out of the seven examined here, in SE. Three of these interpreters see Jacob's dream "after reading Homer" as a rejection of childhood memories and of Shoshanah's influence which is connected with them. Penueli calls this dream "an invention" for that purpose (YA 57); Kurzweil calls it "one of the psychological artistic tricks of the poet" (MA 117); and according to Sadan it is "a shutter to hide the real reason for his choice of profession" (AA76);<sup>19</sup> the "real reason" being Shoshanah jumping into the pool. (A contradictory interpretation can be found in the second part, chapter 8.) This is not the only escapism in the story. According to Sadan (AA 83) "everyone is escaping" in SE: Shoshanah escapes from the oath into her sleep - she is always described as running (AA 84): in the picture in the Consul's office, when playing in the garden, and later in the race; the Consul escapes from obligations and decisions to his travelling; Jacob escapes from the girls, as well as from his origin. Jacob's running away is seen by Kurzweil as shown in his dreams, in his going to Palestine, in his work (MA 121), while according to him Shoshanah is escaping to her illness (MA 154). Zoref says that Jacob's escape to Palestine and to his work is from reality (IY 84); his love for the seaweeds is a substitute for his love for Shoshanah (IY 85). According to Stern the substitute is in the form of the girls (BL 80); if he wants to free himself from the oath

then science is only an illusory freedom (BL 25). On this theme of escaping we actually see a general agreement which is unusual between Agnon's interpreters.

Escapism may result in madness, or in any form of mania; after love it is the psychological theme most discussed by Agnon's interpreters. Tochner explains Shoshanah's behaviour towards Jacob in SE as apathy (PA 190), and the essence of the story as "psychological hesitations" (PA 191); Band finds that the sea, connected with Freudian and Jungian psychology (he does not explain what this psychology involves) is the force which

"keeps Jacob away from meaningful involvement with the girls and with Shoshanah" (NN 370).

A more defined psychological motif is the split personality. This is found by Tochner and Shbid<sup>20</sup> in TS, both with the idea that Isaac and Balaq form two sides of one person. Shbid's words are:

"The dog's psychology feeds on sub-human sympathy between dog and man ... Kummer's character is dog-like in its fidelity and naivety" (KH 385).

Tochner elaborates a little (PA 63-64):

"It is the split personality of the modern hero - Kummer and Balaq are but one person ..."

Balaq is the conscious part of this person, and it is ready to be subdued by the emotional unconscious who is Isaac. The conscious is more advanced than the emotional and is dangerous to it (it can be noted here that this psychological situation is connected by Tochner with the religious attitude of Isaac). On the whole, Tochner finds Agnon's animals outspoken and extroverted as opposed to his heroes (e.g. Kummer, Jacob Rechnitz of SE and Hirshel of Sipur Pashut); who are mostly introverts and "like dumb animals" (PA 72). The tragedy in TS, according to Tochner, is that there is no possible meeting

of the two sides of the split personality (PA 78).

The same theme is also found in EE and is symbolized, according to Bahat and Shaged, by the use of the first two letters of Agnon's own name for the first letters of proper names in the story: some of the characters' names begin with 'A, others with G. (To demonstrate this more clearly the transcription of these names, either the author's or of the story mentioned here, should be: 'Agnon, 'Edo and 'Einam; the common factor is the ' which corresponds to the Hebrew letter "'Ayin". For reasons of convenience it has not been used in the thesis.) Shaged describes this phenomenon as

"encounters between the Ego and various elements in his soul" (BM 328).

Tochner says that there is a conflict between the artist and the student in Agnon (PA 108); but though he calls it "a psychological theme" I find the subject more suitable for the chapter about the poetical aspect of Agnon's interpretation.

Kurzweil is much less definite in his psychological interpretations; according to him "everyone (in EE) is lunatic" (MA 150). In poetical terms it may mean that they are all inclined towards moon worship; Kurzweil's psychological terms are always mixed with poetical ones.

The lunatism and split personality in EE is closely related to the problem of home and homelessness; as Kurzweil puts it (MA 144), the story evolves around "home (in Hebrew it is the same word as for house) and leaving it": the Greifenbachs are away on holiday; the narrator is away from his own home, guarding the Greifenbachs', and his family is also away in Gederah; Genulah is away from her home-country and has vanished from her husband's home in Jerusalem, and Gamzu is away looking for her; Ginat lives as a tenant in a strange house - the Greifenbachs' again; and the newly wed

Ginther and his wife cannot find a home to live in together. Bahat makes the equations: lack of home = dream wanderings = lack of motivation, and so on, connected with mutual drawing of the different characters and a seeming telepathy between them (AH 162-4). Band expresses this idea distinctly:

"Gemulah's sickness is caused by lack of home" (NN 384). On the other hand the whole fantastic world of the story is aroused in the narrator when his family is away and he leaves his own home to look after somebody else's who is also away (NN 394).

Another psychological theme is the problem of conscience and matters of sin, punishment and reward; it is raised particularly in connection with TS, mainly by reason of the seemingly inexplicable (even to Agnon himself) death of Isaac. Katz says that Balaq - or some other dog - barks every time Isaac speaks with Shifrah, reminding him of his bad conscience (concerning his previous connection with the Zionists), and of his nearing end (MD 174). According to Band Isaac's sin is not Zionism but his short relations with Sonia; in his words Isaac is

"a mediocre man with a mediocre guilt but with a great complex";

his punishment fits the complex and not the sin, and it occurs in spite of his remorse (NN 417). The connection with Balaq, according to Band, is in the idea that a sinful man is subhuman, i.e. a dog (NN 434); Balaq is Isaac's alter ego "in some sense", and his bark is a sign of moral recrimination (NN 447).

Orent<sup>21</sup> expresses the original idea that Isaac's sin and punishment are symbolized not by the dog but by the insects in the story - as well as in other stories; they are "the new accuser" and symbolize reward and punishment by their indestructability (HS 400). According to Penueli, however, Isaac's



end does not depend on his sin - which is too trivial - but on his inner character (YA 71).

A guilt complex is also found by Bahat in Mintz of BY, having come about after his taking Leah from her first lover and thus inadvertently causing her death; it is expressed by the circumstances of the stone-setting and of Mazal's poems (AH 39). It seems that Mintz pays with a mental death which follows the death of his wife (AH 43), but according to Bahat all the main characters in the story die, so that such an interpretation is not certain: Leah dies in actuality; Mintz dies mentally with her death; Mazal dies mentally when Leah marries Mintz (AH 44); Tirtsah dies a spiritual death when she herself marries Mazal (AH 48). (I find interpreters on the whole have great difficulty in explaining the various deaths in Agnon's stories. I hope to make it clearer in my own comments in the second part of the work.)

Band dwells on Shoshanah's obsession with death in SE (NN 375), her conversation about the taxidermist and the Egyptian mummies and her sleeping sickness which resembles death. But unlike the characters in BY she is revived at the end of the story.

Some psychological qualifications are attributed by the interpreters to some of Agnon's characters: Jacob Rechnitz of SE is called by Kurzweil "a passive man" with an inferiority complex (MA 118), and just "passive" by Hochman (FA 2); Kurzweil ascribes an inferiority complex also to the pedlar in AR (MA 127); Isaac of TS is called "innocent" by Band and Penuei, as well as by Agnon himself, and Zoref describes him as a solitary man (IY 154).

The term "psychic" or "psychological" is sometimes used by interpreters in a rather vague way: Tochner says that the theme in EE is not just realistic but psychological as well (PA 108);

according to Shaged there is in EE a psychic rule and inevitability of events (BM 329); Kurzweil comments that in SE there is no mention of psychological problems, though these are most interesting (MA 117; he obviously has not read the passage in Jung about literature, mentioned in the Conclusion at the end of the present work); he also says that the painting of the dog in TS means letting him inside the human psychological world (MA 106); Hochman says that in TS Balaq symbolizes aspects of Isaac's psychic life, a quest (presumably for the unattainable), and the wish to return to the womb, i.e. to the past (FA 140); and Penueli finds it difficult to define the psychological truth of BY (YA 40). Tochner makes a general comment on Agnon by saying that there is in him "a psychological pattern of mental processes and of actions" (PA 172).

To conclude the psychological aspect of Agnon's interpretations, here are some statistics: of 13 interpreters, 9 find psychological themes in TS, 8 in SE and 6 in EE; only 3 in BY and 1 each in AR and AS. Of the 13 interpreters 9 deal with love, 6 with mental disturbances; 5 interpreters concern themselves with escapism, 5 with matters of conscience and 5 use the term "psychological". Only 4 see the "return to the womb", which may be regarded as a religious historical yearning for the glorious national past, as a psychological problem; in a similar position is the theme of homelessness, found by only 3 interpreters in EE alone. Only 2 take death as a psychological motif.

It is also interesting to see how far the interpreters go in their psychological analysis of Agnon's stories: while Tochner and Hochman find in 3 stories only 2 subjects each, Bahat finds in 2 stories 6 psychological themes. In 4 stories Band finds 6 themes, Kurzweil 5 and Penueli 4. Shaged and Katz each find 2 themes in one story and Shbid, Sadan and Orent only 1 psychological theme, each of them in only one story.

#### IV MYTHOS, POETRY, ART AND NATURE

This is a composite chapter; not as complicated and undefined as the psychological aspect, but composed of various subjects which are too minor each to form a chapter on its own, and on the other hand have some relation to each other. This relation is the non-rationalistic view of life which is the attribute of the poet and the artist, which includes references to mythos, Nature religion and legends. I have divided this chapter into sections, the contents of which are as follows: 1. women, Eros and love; 2. fate, archaic forces, and death; 3. dreams; 4. natural phenomena, flora and fauna; 5. mythology; 6. poetry and art.

##### Women, Eros and love

The subject of women, which plays an important role in Nature mythology, appears again and again in Agnon's stories, and some interpreters seem particularly susceptible to it. One of them is Kurzweil, who finds it in (at least) four of the seven stories examined here: Gemulah in EE symbolizes the Erotic principle which torments men -

"the erotic activity is always performed by women" (MA 155);  
in SE

"woman is the active factor of life" (MA 121)  
- here it is not just the heroine Shoshanah, but all the women surrounding Jacob Rechnitz, who are more active than he is: his mother, Shoshanah's mother Gertrude, the six Jaffa girls, and probably others; in AR the Lady is described by Kurzweil as

"a demonic vitality, her power is mysterious, gloomy, seductive, archaic, overcoming the male" (MA 126);  
in TS there is a correlation between dogs and women, and both are particularly dangerous if submitted to (MA 109). It may be concluded from these examples that the influence of women

in Agnon's stories does not seem to Kurzweil to be altogether positive.

Zoref is another interpreter who has noted the power of women, as appears in his comments on TS:

"Isaac thinks and acts mainly around, for, or because of women" (IY 155);

and also in his remark that

"the creative fire of the artist Bleukopf is enhanced by the beauty of his wife Tosia" (IY 157).

Zoref, then, is not totally negative in his attitude to the problem of women.

Stern, who specializes in SE, ascribes to the six girls as many "demonic faculties" as possible: they symbolize the stars, whose rule comes about only at night, when the sun - symbolized by Shoshanah - has stopped shining for the day (BL 33); they are compared to demons and "liliths" (Lilith, the screech-owl, is the name of the queen of demons in Jewish tradition) in their eroticism and sensualism (Asenat and Tamar), with reference to their wings (Leah, Rayah, Tamar), and in their swiftness (Mirah) (BL 33-34). Stern further describes them as cannibals and their blue eyes (Asenat and Tamar) are a sign of bestiality and death (BL 35). Her comprehensive title for them is Man Huntresses (BL 37). Mythologically, Tamar is the most conspicuous; with her carnation flower - a "claw" flower, whose French and German name includes the name of the Devil - and the blue-grey aura surrounding her, she represents Death, Satan, and the Evil Inclination (BL 46).

No other interpreter is as forceful in his attributes to the six girls of SE as Stern, who ascribes to them eroticism, sensualism, cannibalism; demonic, sinning force; snare-laying, bestialities, death-like cruelty, deception and malicious mockery. Shoshanah, however, is described by Kurzweil as "an unreachable goddess, the mermaid of Jacob's dream" (MA 119)

with beauty which is above and beyond her and which is also frightening (MA 297). Sadan is satisfied with mentioning that both Shoshanah and Rachel are compared to a palm-tree, while Tamar (whose name means "date-palm") is Shoshanah's main rival (AA 81-82).

Hochman makes the curious comment, concerning SE and EE, that "lunatic" (or moon-struck, i.e. sleep-walking) women, referring to Shoshanah and Gemulah, show symptoms of "rejecting Eros" (FA 2). Eros, a word used by many of Agnon's interpreters, is a problematic term, as is evident from the use of it by Penueli: in connection with BY he distinguishes Tirtsah's problematic love for Mazal both from Eros, which he describes as "blinding and intoxicating", and from "natural love", the purpose of which is motherhood (though that is its ultimate result when Tirtsah has a child); he also differentiates between Tirtsah's love and lust, or sexual attraction, for her love is too calculating to be either Eros, or a wish for motherhood, or lust (YA 37-38). But in distinguishing Tirtsah's love from all the other forms of love Penueli also distinguishes those forms from each other; he thus separates Eros from physical attraction and from "natural love". In another place Penueli says that "all that is happening in BY takes place not at the service of Life but at the command of Eros with its hidden follies" (YA 165); thus he both contradicts himself and leaves the meaning of Eros as evasive as ever. Concerning AS Penueli poses Eros in contrast to spiritual love and to holiness (YA 24-27) and gives it the connotation of physical love; and in his description of the end of SE (SPR)<sup>22</sup> he joins erotic feeling both to love and to affection, and the definition of this term is again obscure.

From Hochman's comment on the rejection of Eros by lunatic women (FA 2) it is clear that by Eros he means physical love,

for that seems to be the two women's problem. That is also Stern's meaning in her book on SE, where eroticism is one of the unholy features of the six girls (BL 35), while Shoshanah stands for the spiritual love of God (BL 63). But for Kurzweil there is no confusion: in the word Eros he actually means love in all its aspects, not broken down into its various forms of body and spirit. Thus he speaks of the essence of EE as

"the problems of Man, Life, Eros and Death" (MA 150), where Eros corresponds to the archaic and the magical, to art, death and love (MA 156-7). In BY Eros stands on the same side as the forest and spring (MA 48), but in AR

"the eternal mysteries of the Eros are revealed as a religious factor" (MA 127).

Hochman sees Eros in its dangerous quality:

"The union by Eros (in EE) is unattainable, and endangers the one who gets it" (FA 181).

The confusion is increased by the interpretations of SE where, according to Stern, Jacob is attracted by the eroticism of the girls who drive him away from Shoshanah (BL 35), while according to Kurzweil the girls keep Jacob away from Eros, incarnated in the divine figure of Shoshanah (MA 154).

A wider meaning to the term Eros is given by Band, who equates Eros with regard to EE with artistic creation (NN 383). This is his interpretation of the love of the two men, Ginat and Gamzu, for Gemulah, who is not, in this case an actual woman but a beautiful idea. But Band is not consistent, for when he says on AS that

"the Eros in this case is not a sin but a necessity to make the world go round" (QQ 58)

he obviously means again physical love, which is what Rafael neglects, while adhering to his "artistic creation" in the form of writing the scrolls of Law.

Some see Eros as an aspect of love, others see love as an

aspect of Eros. Love is a subject never missing when dealing with Agnon's work; as Penueli puts it:

"If there is rebellion in Agnon's stories .... it is made in order to free Love (from its traditional bondage). It is a first sign of revival, new blossom, new implanting in the soil" (YA 50).

In the previous chapter we looked at the complexes of love from a psychological point of view; now it will be discussed in its poetic-mythic aspect. It is more or less agreed amongst interpreters that Tirtsah's love for Mazal in BY is not really her own feeling but her mother's, who was not able to realize it. But while psychologically this love for her mother's former lover seems to interpreters as an incestuous act on the part of Tirtsah, in its mythological aspect she identifies herself with her mother and thus makes her love legitimate. Penueli explains it as the

"law of return, whose force is great in the history of nature, the world and man",

and whatever happened to Leah happens also to Tirtsah, except that she succeeds where her mother failed (YA 36).

There is more than one type of love in SE. First there is the childhood love of Shoshanah and Jacob; for Zoref the main theme of the story is the realization of this love (IY 86); for Penueli, this love is realized in full when it includes eroticism and affection, memories of childhood and oath, science and humanity, and becomes the poetry of life (SPr). Other comments are made by Kurzweil, when he describes a woman's love as

"pure and close to the source of life" (MA 121);

by Band, when he compares the story to Canticles and says that Agnon sees

"cosmic problems through the love nexus" (NN 366), thus making it more than a man-woman relation; and by Stern, who uses this word only with reference to the spiritual love

Jacob has for Gertrude (symbolizing love of God) which dies with her death (BL 58). His feelings towards all other women are not regarded by Stern as love. (The discrepancy between the interpreters may be seen clearly with regard to the feeling of Jacob towards the six girls: Stern takes it as a physical attraction, while Kurzweil sees in it pure friendship).

Concerning EE only two interpreters see the relations between the three main characters as love: Fisch says that Gemulah is torn between her two lovers, Gamzu and Ginat (MI 133); Band calls it "a three-cornered love affair", which is a three directional pull of attractions (NN 391). But as according to him Gemulah symbolizes "artistic creation", he denies that love is the real force behind the triangle. A similar triangle of forces is seen by Band in AS, being Torah (Sanctity) - Miriam (Death) - the child who never was (Love)(NN 112).

#### Fate, archaic forces, death

Vaguely defined terms like destiny, external forces (demonic, archaic, etc.) and the like are used frequently by some interpreters (though to my mind these forces are usually quite definite according to Agnon himself, and so they should be if seen in their mythological context). Thus the love of Tirtsah for Mazal in BY is seen by Band, Qeshet and Penueli as manoeuvred by destiny; and according to Kurzweil the Lady and the Pedlar in AR are drawn toward each other by a force which originates in "secret sources" (MA 125), and which is called by Band "a mysterious force" (NN 399). In the same way Band finds in DY that "a strange force is governing the story" (NN 118) and in EE "the encounter of the narrator and Gamzu at Greifenbach's house is ... governed by strange forces" (NN 384). "Cosmic problems" in SE is another mysterious expression of Band's (NN 366).

Kurzweil is just a little more specific, when he calls these not just "strange" but "deep ancient destructive forces" (MA 48),



as they appear to him in BY; or "demonic forces" as in EE, where they are named as seduction, sin, love and non-existence (MA 145). "Demonic forces" are attributed by Stern to the six girls in SE (BL 33), while according to Zoref, Isaac of TS

"does not act voluntarily but is led by hidden psychic forces and by divine Providence" (IY 154).

Fate would be a better term to be used here, as it leads Isaac to his death; Shbid indeed sees this force as fate, expressed by Isaac's writing on the dog Balaq (KI 387). HD is another story of destined love ending with death, as seen by Penueli and Sadan (YA 166; BQ 186).

Death, as Orent says concerning TS, is "the goal of life" (HS 395), though it does not always govern the whole of one's life; it is however, sometimes inexplicable for the by-stander. Band, for instance, cannot understand the many deaths occurring in Agnon's stories; in one place he calls Isaac's death in TS "a meaningless sacrifice" (NN 425), and in another "pacification of the God of Nature" (HO 76)<sup>23</sup> who releases the longed for rains soon after Isaac's death. So also with reference to EE, Band describes the author's attitude as

"not pessimism but a resignation to .... the waste of life, which is hard to understand" (NN 394).

In SE death appears as an obsession of Shoshanah, a fact which is stressed by Band (NN 376), while Hochman sees it only as a stage before awakening to life again (FA 5). According to Stern the whole story smells of death, wrapped around the girls - Tamar in particular - and it is the fate of both Jacob and Shoshanah caused by his betrayal of her (BL 37-97).

Both Kurzweil and Bahat see death in EE as a general problem and a part of the problem of life. In AS death, according to Band, is a counterpart to love and holiness in the triangle of forces (NN 112), and in HD it has already been seen as destiny. Yohanan, according to Band, is

"a symbol of death for the living" (NN 82).

An out of line comment is made by Friedman<sup>24</sup> who thinks that there is a mockery of the dead in HD (SYA 82); Friedman is the exceptional critic who calls Agnon

"a wingless poet and a prisoner of the past",  
and his stories

"cemetary flowers" (SYA 36).

### Dreams

Dreams are another important factor in Agnon's stories, including day-dreams and hallucinations, many times of dead people walking about and such like visions. In accordance with Jung's theories most dreams in Agnon's stories reflect the inner life of the dreamer with a projection into his own past life combined with the collective racial history. This makes the dreams susceptible to different ways of interpretation, and it is a notable fact that on the whole Agnon's interpreters do not feel safe on such shaky ground and they leave most of the dreams unexplained, though not unmentioned. Thus Jacob's dream in SE about the sea and the moon is said by many interpreters (Penueli, Kurzweil, Sadan, Band) to be nothing but a psychological "trick" by the author, who intends to show that Jacob wants to forget the "real reason" for his choosing of a profession in order to forget Shoshanah (s. previous chapter); none of these interpreters attempts to interpret the dream itself. Stern does it, though, and she compares the "revelation" of the sea before Jacob to the revelation of God before Samuel.

In connection with SE Hochman comments on the dream-like nature of Shoshanah:

"She is not just a real girl but also a figment of Rechnitz's imagination, a terror plus wonder and exhilaration" (FA 4).

In this description she is not far off the moon, "sweet and terrible", as it appears in Rechnitz's dream. But Band is as usual both

mystified and mystifying; for him "Shoshanah remains an enigma" (NN 393). On HD, however, he elaborates much more, and gives an interesting observation on the dreamy atmosphere and Yohanan's non-realistic existence in the story: In earlier versions, because of his utter loneliness (in the later one Agnon introduces other living beings) Yohanan

"has hallucinations of young maidens rising from their graves at night .... A stranger urges him to take a wife, but who would marry a man with his job?"

He becomes obsessed with the beautiful girl, who, after her death, causes his own death as well.

"The Gothic atmosphere allows easy transition into the realm of the fantastic and we are not troubled by realistic questions. Hallucination in such a setting is completely convincing and one almost waits for the appearance of a female ghost since the yearning of Yohanan for a mate to alleviate his loneliness is made apparent. Love and death are incompatible in the world of reality and it is only plausible that Yohanan die as he reaches his beloved" (NN 82).

(This section could have fitted the previous chapter, but I wished to collect all the material concerning dreams together.)

Some of the most astonishing of Agnon's stories appear together under the title of Sefer ha-Ma'asim (SM), - "The Book of Deeds" or "The Book of Tales" (KS VI, p. 103); they comprise a mixture of times and places, live and dead people. On these stories Kurzweil comments that they are

"characterized by the reality in them, which includes elements tied together in a seemingly haphazard connection often opposing the laws of cause and effect of everyday life" (MA 73).

This mixture is so characteristic of dreams, that in another place Kurzweil says that

"in the world of SM the barrier separating the world of dreams from what we call an awakening reality has been removed" (MA 79).

Kurzweil explains this method of writing by the fatal change in

Agnon, caused by his inability to return to the emotional religious state of his youth (MA 32-34).

Bahat talks about the strange dreams of the narrator in 'Ore'ah Natah la-Lun' (ONL) - "A Guest for the Night" (KS IV), where the narrator pays a visit to the town of his childhood; these dreams are mostly connected with death, and Bahat comments on the special atmosphere they introduce to the story (AH 138). But as usual he does not attempt to interpret them; instead he explains that they are caused by a break in the dreamer's psyche; dreams, he says, are reflections of the dreamer's mood (AH 139-140).

#### Natural phenomena, flora and fauna

The moon had probably the greatest influence on Agnon, who loved nature in general and introduced it in most of his stories. Band rightly comments with reference to EE on Agnon's "fascination by the moon" (NN 392). We have already seen Gemulah's and Shoshanah's connection with the moon, both being "moon-struck women" (s. previous chapter). Hochman also makes the comment that "Gemulah is linked with the moon and the stars" (FA 5), and that Shoshanah is identified both with the moon and with the sea (FA 3). For Stern the moon in SE is of course as ungodly as all things of nature. It is

"cold as death; sweet as sin; terrible as the anger  
of God" (BL 22).

According to her Shoshanah is identified not with the moon but with the sun, while the six girls resemble the stars as a negative quality in comparison with the sun (BL 33). Some further examples of the ungodly things of nature in Stern's interpretation of SE are: the unlimited sea representing chaos, which turns into something good only when limited by God, to become something like the pool in the Consul's garden (BL 18; 24); the seaweed as a symbol for foreign culture (BL 24), while the flowers, forming the background to the young love, die with

Gertrude's death (BL 58); Jacob's bringing to Shoshanah somebody else's flowers being the prime symbol of betrayal (BL 80). Flowers are connected with most of the girls, as a false substitute for Shoshanah's real flowers, the roses (ib.). Animals are also ungodly: Tamar is connected with the unclean bird hoopoe (BL 47); the parrot sings

"the cursed duet between Israel and his God, the song of estrangement" (BL 66-67);

and the stuffed animals of the taxidermist symbolize God and Israel mummifying each other (BL 83-86). A marked difference may be noticed here between Stern and Qariv: they both treat SE as a Jewish allegory, but while Qariv sticks to Jewish motifs, Stern deals also with natural and mythological motifs, treating them as negative forces opposing Jewish religion and tradition.

The sea is considered by Stern to be the most wicked of all forces in the story: it is the primaeval chaos element, a negative force always wishing to return to its original destructive form (BL 18-19); it is mysteriously connected with the hoopoe bird and with Tamar and the moon in a conspiracy to eliminate Jacob (BL 47); the pledge between the girls and the sea to destroy Jacob is a counterpoint to the oath between Jacob and Shoshanah, and the struggle of Shoshanah with the sea is the main theme of the story (BL 19-20). (An opposite view of the bond between Shoshanah and the sea will be apparent in chapter 8.)

This is an entirely different picture from that which Penueli gets from the end of the story, when he says:

"In the midst of this epic is immersed a great affection, an enormous love is attached to it, and much eroticism, so that it spreads over the whole sea, the source of life; all that is full of poetry" (SPr).

On the other hand Band rather agrees with Stern, though not as forcefully, when he says that

"the sea interests the girls more than Jacob ... it has a mysterious (!) attraction, being both the source of life and a grave for the dead" (NN 370).

(Band's expression leaves us in doubt as to the meaning of his words: they mean either that the girls are more interested in the sea than in Jacob, or that they are more interested in the sea than Jacob is; if it is the latter, Band forgets that the sea is Jacob's laboratory.)

Not many interpreters are bothered by the flora used by Agnon in various stories as an expression of moods and feelings, and what there is concerns mainly SE. There the theme of flowers is concentrated on by Stern, as has been shown above; the heroine herself is named after the rose, whereby she is compared by Sadan to "Rose among the Thorns", namely Sleeping Beauty (AA 82). Sadan also comments on her and Rachel's being compared by Agnon to the palm-tree, which is the meaning of Tamar's name; this makes Rachel and Tamar, especially the last, the main rivals of Shoshanah (AA 81). He also finds in the seaweeds a symbol for the mysterious (ib.), while Penneli connects them with the love of Jacob and Shoshanah (SPr). Most interpreters, however, see in the seaweeds a symbol for foreign culture. The Consul's garden, on the other hand, is generally understood more on the grounds of Jewish tradition and the Biblical book of Canticles as a symbol for the love between God and Israel.

In both BY and All the forest expresses an opposite force to civilization. On the former Kurzweil puts the forest on the same side as Eros and spring, in apposition to the Torah (MA 48), while on the latter Band says that

"the forest is the traditional realm of extracivilized chaos and passion" (NN 399).

Some animals feature in Agnon's writing, particularly dogs. Kurzweil dwells on the dogs appearing in BY and TS, which are connected with women and symbolize seduction (MA 47). In TS dogs are one of the main themes of the story. Katz comments on the connection between the bark of a dog and the meeting of Isaac

and Shifrah (MD 171), but he does not elaborate on it; he also says that the conversation between the dog Balaq and the owl ("lilith") marks the beginning of Isaac's tragedy, ending with his death (MD 176). Penueli says that

"when Faust was remembering his sin the Devil joined him in the form of a dog" (YA 86),

and compares it to Balaq and other dogs who keep joining Isaac wherever he goes: the dog on Sonia's bed-cover, Leichtfuss's dog, and Rabinovitz's dog - all symbolize unfaithfulness. Shbid describes the figure of Balaq rather vaguely as

"the artistic part of the background to the story" (KII 382).

A different kind of interpretation is the comparison of certain characters in Agnon to animals. Stern compares Tamar in SE to the hoopoe bird (BL 47); Kurzweil compares the Lady in AR to the serpent from the Garden of Eden, symbolizing death (MA 126).

### Mythology

There are many references, either by Agnon or by his interpreters, to well-known myths or legends. SE, for instance, is full of expressions like "a young god", "mighty gods", etc., and of names from ancient Greek literature like Homer, Sappho, Medea and Esculapius (curiously enough, there is no distinction between the mythic, legendary and historical); this fact led quite a few of his interpreters to regard the story as completely foreign to Judaism. Besides, the story is in a way a parallel to the fairy-tale of Sleeping Beauty - first noticed probably by Sadan (AA 82) - the German name of which is "Rose amongst the Thorns"; both Fisch and Band agree with the comparison. Other mythological attributes to Shoshanah are made by Kurzweil, who calls her a goddess and a mermaid (MA 119); and by Hochman, who identifies her with the

"great agitated Mother of all being, all desires",  
being a combination of the Moon, the Sea and Shoshanah's own

mother (FA 3). On the other hand, by Stern she is identified with the Jewish God, by the quality of "never forgetting" (BL 61). In her faculty as an avenger Shoshanah-God is also compared to Medea, who murdered her rival and killed her young to spite her treacherous husband (BL 89). The ship of death seen in the sea coming to take Jacob away (BL 91) is an extract taken (presumably unknowingly) by Stern from the myth of the Spirit of the Year (s. chapters six and eight).

Some references to different myths are made by various interpreters concerning the story of AR. I have mentioned Kurzweil's simile of the Biblical Garden of Eden; according to him the Lady plays the roles of both Eve (Desire) and the Serpent (Death) (MA 126). Band sees the Lady as a sort of vampire, but at the same time he finds in the story a reference to the crucifixion where the Pedlar Yosef embodies both Jesus and his father Yosef (NN 400-402). In the story's theme of the cannibal witch living in the forest Bahat finds a correlation to the German story of Hansle and Gretle (AH 119).

Some seemingly mythological figures are found here and there by interpreters with not much foundation supplied by the author: Band sees Leichtfuss of TS as a Mephistophelian figure (NN 432), while Penneli finds the same quality in the dog Balaq (YA 86). Bahat sees in the legendary bird Gerofit in EE a figure of Orpheus, using an anagram to prove his point (AH 170); Shaqed finds the character of Nemesis behind the happenings in the same story (BM 329). Based more on literature than mythology Qeshet compares Tirtsah of BY to Shakespeare's Juliet, with no further explanation (MMA 375).

Using more general terms, both Sadan and Penneli describe HD as (the former)

"a mixture of distant myths, closer folklore, Jewish customs and Gentiles' beliefs" (BQ 186);



and (the latter)

"a world of gods, fate and death with no laughter" (YA 166).

### Poetry and Art

Professional artists in the English meaning of the word - namely painters and sculptors - are not numerous in Agnon. Two of them appear in TS: one is Leichtfuss's father, who used to do wood-carving for churches; the other is Bleukopf the painter, of whom Zoref says that he derives his inspiration from the beauty of his wife (IY 157). Band describes Bleukopf as

"the sole possessor of truth" (NN 446);

Orent says that artists like Bleukopf and Rafael, the scribe of the Law-scrolls in AS, live only for the sake of their art, and die when their task ends. Art for its own sake, says Orent, saves from death (HS 395). Band also puts artistic creation in apposition to death, concerning both AS and EE (NN 112; 383).

Commenting on the artistic faculty of Agnon, Kurzweil talks about EE as

"the separate artistic phenomenon inside the frame of the whole range of work" (MA 141);

concerning AR Bahat sees it - in opposition to some other interpretations - more as a piece of art than as an allegory (AH 124); he however does not find any artistic justification for the Lady's death (AH 123).

Poetry, more than any other form of art, is Agnon's special line, and it is found by interpreters all over his work. Here are a few examples of some of their expressions on this subject.

Qeshet: in BY there is

"a basis of love, heart-drawn poetry, spiritual art ... Agnon is a poetic realist .... there is a symbiosis of poetry and irony" (MMA 376);

Bahat: in EE

"the bird Gerofit is poetry and music as a link between Life and Death" (AH 170).

Penueli comments on the combined poetry of affection, love and eroticism spread over the sea at the end of SE (SPr); and on "the poetic language rhythm" in other stories (YA 165-163).

Shbid says that

"the destruction of Jerusalem, Judaism, the world, is a poetic metaphor of loneliness and neglect" in TS (KH 332).

One interpreter, Friedman, says that

"poetry is not a psychological need"

for Agnon (SYA 83); but Brenner sums Agnon up as a "talented poet" (KBr 251) who used "poetic emotions and metaphor" rather than "real observation, psychological sketches or logical intuition" (KBr 328).

## V SYMBOLISM

In the introduction it has been noted that the symbols which Agnon's interpreters find in his stories may be categorized after the same system as the interpretations. Accordingly, the relevant ideas have been brought up in the previous chapters; here I shall dwell more on the sources of the symbols and on their use by the interpreters.

Primarily, the symbols in Agnon may be divided into two groups: the ones which are clearly used as such by Agnon and the ones which are seen as symbols by the interpreters. On the whole the symbols may originate in Jewish tradition, European traditions, psychology, Agnon's own life, or in the interpreter's own imagination. The last possibility is the main source of discrepancy between interpreters.

Most obvious of Agnon's private symbols are the names he gives to some of his most prominent heroes and heroines. In *BY*, for instance, the names of the four main figures may be explained: Mazal, for instance, means "luck" in Hebrew, and he is the lucky man with whom both women fall in love (strangely enough I have not found this idea in any of the interpretations of *BY*, though to me it seems quite obvious); in the name of Mintz Bahat sees the meaning of "coins" in German, and an indication for his trade as a merchant and his mercantile attitude towards life (AH 36); both Bahat (AH 35) and Penneli (YA 34) understand the meaning of Leah's name in Hebrew as "weariness", for she is the one who tires of her luckless life, having been forced to marry Mintz instead of Mazal; Penneli also explains Tirtsah's name as "solving problem", for she succeeds in fulfilling her destiny in marrying Mazal, in contrast to the frustration of her mother (YA 34). In the same way Hochman interprets the names of Gemulah and Gamzu in *EE*: Gemulah has the double Hebrew meaning of "weaning" and "rewarding", a name suggestive

of the glorious childhood of the people of Israel; Gamzu's name, meaning "this too", "suggesting the Aramaic term for grafting in fig culture" refers, according to Hochman, to his attempt to reform Orthodox Judaism which is not acceptable to him (FA 6). Another name whose translation is suggestive is Gothold Ehrlich of SE; Stern translates the name as "God holds" and "the straight one" - the latter is a reference to one of God's names in the Bible, Yeshurun, which is derived from the Hebrew word 'yashar', meaning "straight" (BL 52); Ehrlich thus fits into her scheme of symbolism, being the figure of the straight and supporting Jewish God. She contrasts him with the figure of Jacob Rechnitz, whose first name may express "deceit" in Hebrew (BL 52).

The use of two letter of his name - 'A and G - as initials for some characters in some of his stories is also seen by some interpreters as a means of symbolism on the part of Agnon. Such names are most prominent in two stories, EE and Ad Olam (A0) - "Forever More" (KS VIII, p. 315). Concerning EE Bahat notes the two groups of figures in the stories, one in which all the names start with the Hebrew letter 'Ayin, the other in which all the names start with Gimel. This division symbolizes the division of the author's personality and is the reason for the mutual attraction between the two groups (AH 172). A similar division exists in A0, in which Tochner sees the words beginning with the letter Gimel as symbolizing secular or paganistic values, in opposition to Jewish religious ones (PA 143); he does not seem to say, however, that the latter are symbolized by the letter 'Ayin. A different meaning is given to the letter Gimel by Hochman, who claims that it symbolizes in EE both 'golah' - "exile", and 'ge'ulah' - "redemption" (FA 7).

Of the symbols mentioned above the name Jacob is probably the only one which has been explained in the same way in traditional Judaism and even in the Old Testament; Esau said

when he discovered that Jacob tricked him in receiving Isaac's blessing:

"Is not he rightly called Jacob, for he (deceitfully) supplanted me twice" (Gen XXVII 36).

Quite a few names and expressions in Agnon have their origin in Biblical and Rabbinical literature. Taking the same name again, which is a title for the people of Israel, Band comments on its appearing in SE in connection with the name Shoshanah:

"what Hebrew reader can forget for a moment that (this) couple evoke the image and poem of "Shoshanat Ya'akov" ("Jacob's Rose") in which Jacob is the Jewish people and the Rose is the Tora or the shekhina" (NN 381).

To Agnon's interpreters Shoshanah is even more than that. As the Shekhinah is equated with Queen Shabbat so also is Shoshanah in SE, according to Sadan, Hochman, Fisch, Qariv; and in her comparison of the story with Canticles, Stern also equates Shoshanah with God, being the "bridegroom with golden hair" (BL 60) - in spite of the fact that in Canticles Shoshant ha-Amaqim, "lily-of-the-valley", refers, according to the homilies, to Israel as the bride of God. Jewish symbolism is also found in the name of Yosef in AR, being on the one hand the son of Jacob whom Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce - according to Kurzweil, Band, Bahat; and on the other Band compares him to the saintly father of Jesus symbolizing Jesus himself as a destined sacrifice (NN 402). Another destined sacrifice is, according to Band, Isaac of TS, the namesake of Abraham's son, a near victim to a merciless God (NN 425). (It is notable that both Yosef's seduction and Isaac's sacrifice in Agnon have been carried out, in contrast to the events in the Bible.)

Jewish symbols do not appear only in names; they may be connected with certain terms or ideas. Thus the number seven (sheva' in Hebrew) has from time immemorial been connected with the word "oath" (shevu'ah in Hebrew). According to Genesis XXI

Beer Sheba ("well of seven" or "well of oath", pronounced be-er sheva') was so called because Abraham and Abimalekh made an oath of covenant there; they used seven sheep as a means of witness for this oath. Sadan bases his interpretation on this symbolism of the number seven. In his opinion the significance of this number is shown in that connection (AA 75), and stresses its relation to some Jewish motifs as the Seven Pillars of Wisdom (AA 93) and the seven maidens, companions of Queen Esther (AA 91). Other symbolic terms are found by Tochner in EE: he notes that water usually symbolizes the Law, shepherds symbolize the ancient ancestors of the Jewish people, and the eagle is an emblem of ancient Rome (PA 114); Bahat also remarks on the Rabbinical connection of water with the Torah (AH 31). Numbers may also be symbolic, and according to Tochner forty days in EE symbolize the forty years wandering in the desert after the Exodus; twenty-two dancers are the letters in the Hebrew alphabet; and Gemulah being twelve years old symbolizes the original number of the letters in God's name (PA 115). The number twelve appears also in the number of roses in Shoshanah's room in SE, and is explained by Stern as referring to the number of the tribes of Israel (BL 70).

The multilateral symbolism of Shoshanah in SE includes also a non-Jewish aspect. She is a counterpart of the heroine of the German fairy-tale of Sleeping Beauty, waiting for her lover to awaken her with a kiss. Two other ancient symbols are the sea and the forest, which have found their way into psychological symbolism as well. Kurzweil, Band and Bahat agree that the forest in AR and in BY symbolizes "the realm of extracivilization", acting with "ancient forces" on people who find themselves "outside (conventional) society". No such agreement, though, occurs concerning the symbolism of the sea, which is one of the main factors in the events of SE. The idea, both mythological and

psychological, of the sea as the source of life is taken up by Fisch to mean the origin of the Jewish people, i.e. its glorious past (MI 123). Qariv goes further and connects the idea of "origin" with Darwin, to symbolize the foreign culture Rechnitz so eagerly pursues (SEL 106). For Stern the sea is the symbol of ancient chaos which has been limited by God to become the beautiful garden-pool (BL 18). An idea for which I have found no foundation is expressed by Sadan, saying that the sea is the "element of wakefulness" (AA 36).

Many of the symbols seen as such by Agnon's interpreters are Agnon's own invention, and naturally are still more open to discrepancy amongst them. An example for this is the various interpretations given to the seaweeds as a symbol: for Stern they symbolize foreign culture (versus Jewish culture symbolized by flowers - BL 24), while for Qariv they represent Agnon's own creation based on European literature, instead of on the treasures of Jewish lore (SEL 105). Zoref sees in the seaweeds a substitute for Jacob's love for Shoshanah (IV 84), while for Sadan they simply express all that is "mysterious" (AA 81). A similar discrepancy occurs between the views of interpreters of Shoshanah's sleeping sickness: for Sadan it symbolizes Shoshanah's escape from the oath (AA 82), while Stern sees in it a sign for Jacob's rejection of Shoshanah (BL 84); for Qariv it symbolizes the rationalized thought of Jacob's generation (SEL 106); allegorically, both last interpretations mean the same thing.

There is a gradation in the symbolic view of the six girls in SE. Sadan sees in them the six weekdays as opposed to the holy Shabbat (AA 91); but also together with Shoshanah they stand for the Seven Wisdoms, presumably secular learning (AA 93). To Qariv they symbolize the pleasures of everyday life: love, homeliness, sports, science, etc. (SEL 106); - Qariv mentions only these four pleasures; Shoshanah, in this case, represents the holy

pleasure of studying the Law and Jewish tradition (SEL 105).

Stern goes to extremes in making the six girls symbolize everything which is demonic and wicked (BL 33). A similar dispute occurs in connection with EE, where Gemulah is thought by Kurzweil to symbolize all that is archaic-poetic (MA 149); by Fisch

"the past which is insecurely rooted in the present" (MI 136); by Tochner

"the sad delicate figure of the Shekhinah of Israel" (PA 204); and by Hochman both the

"remotest reaches of the ancestral tradition" (FA 5) and the

"feminine dimension of the soul" (FA 181).

So there is also no agreement as to what Gamzu's one eye in EE symbolizes, either evasiveness, as Kurzweil suggests (MA 154); or a holy sickness as a manifestation of madness in antiquity, indicating the character of a poet or a prophet, according to Bahat (AH 165); or the Talmudic figure of Nahum of Gamzu who was full of blemishes and used to say always "this too is for the best" ("gam zu le-tovah"), according to Tochner (PA 112).

In TS the main symbol is the dog Balaq, or dogs in general. Most interpreters agree that dogs are bad omens; they do not agree as to the specific omens they represent. According to Kurzweil they symbolize "ancient desires" (MA 110); Hochman sees in them Isaac's hidden aggression and desire, Sonia's "dogginess" and the decadence of the times (FA 140-143); to Penueli the dog appears as Mephistopheles (YA 86); and to Katz just as bad conscience (MD 174). Tochner is one interpreter who sees the dog as representative not of the unconscious but of the conscious, the rational part of Isaac which warns him against evil but to no avail (PA 63).

Sometimes everyday words are used by Agnon in the same way. One word of this kind is expressed by Isaac's trade in TS, a



painter - 'tsaba' ' in Hebrew - which is the same root as the word for hypocrisy - 'tsevi'ut'. On this basis the interpreters explain the significance of Isaac's job: Band calls it

"a superficial covering of the ugly, the shabby" (NN 437); to Hurvitz<sup>25</sup> it means "masquerading" (IS 174); Zoref sees in it the changes in Isaac's life, as the changes coming about with a new paint (IY 154); and Katz, the hypocrisy of the religious fanatics who are compared to the stuffed hyaena - 'tsavo'a', also from the same root (MD 176).

#### NOTES

- 1 Analytical Psychology (AP); C.G. Jung; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968.
- 2 Agnon ha-mehadesh, ha-ma'amin voha-aman (MMA); Y. Qeshet; Molad (Mol) 16, p. 373.
- 3 Ketavim (KL); A.M. Lifshitz; Rav Cook Inst., 1949.
- 4 Kol Ketavav (KBr); Y.H. Brenner; Stible, 1929.
- 5 Shevu'at Emunim, lemi, lemah? (SEL); A. Qariv; Mol 4 (27), p. 102.
- 6 Ha-begidah ve-liqhah (BL); Dinah Stern; Mahbarot le-Sifrut, 1964.
- 7 Bein bayit le-qever (BQ); D. Sadan; Le-Agnon shai (LS), p. 185; The Public Committee for Agnon's Seventieth Birthday, 1959.
- 8 S.Y. Agnon ve-Hayim Hazaz (AH); Y. Bahat; Yovel Library Ltd., 1962.
- 9 Nostalgia and Nightmare (NN); A.J. Band; California University, 1968.
- 10 Massot al sipurei S.Y. Agnon (MA); B. Kurzweil; Schoken, 1966.
- 11 Agnon's Tales of Mystery and Imagination (MI); H. Fisch; Tradition (Tr) 9, p. 123.
- 12 The Fiction of Agnon (FA); B. Hochman; Cornell University Press, 1970.
- 13 Yetsirato shel Agnon (YA); S.Y. Penueli; Tarbut ve-Hinukh, 1950.
- 14 Qishrei Qesharim u-Qesharav (QQ); A. Band; Mol 4 (27), p. 97.
- 15 Peshet Agnon (PA); M. Tochner; Masadah, 1968.
- 16 Agnon mul ha-mevukhah ha-datit (MD); Y. Katz; LS, p. 163.

- 17 S.Y. Agnon, ha-ish ve-yetsirato (IY); E. Zoref; Niv, 1957.
- 18 Be'ayot mivniyot be-yetsirato shel Agnon (BM); G. Shaqed; LS, p. 307.
- 19 Al S.Y. Agnon (AA); D. Sadan; Ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 1959.
- 20 Kelev Hutsot ve-adam (KH); E. Shbid; Mol 16, p. 381.
- 21 Hirhurei ha-sofer ki-tefilat yahid (HS); Y. Orent; Mol 16, p. 394.
- 22 Shenei pera'iqim al S.Y. Agnon (SPR); S.Y. Penueli; Gazit (Gz) 17, 5-6, p. 14.
- 23 Ha-het ve-onsho bi-Temol Shilshom (HO); A. Band; Mol 1967, p. 75.
- 24 S.Y. Agnon (SYA); D.A. Friedman; Ha-Shilo'ah (SI) 42, p. 80.
- 25 Ikuv ha-shelihut (IS); Rivqah Hurvitz; Mozna'im (Moz) 27, p. 173.

## 9. THE INTERPRETERS - SUMMING UP AND CRITICISM

It is almost futile to examine all Agnon's critics and interpreters, of whom I have made an inexhaustive list of about sixty (and more of them may be added every week). But as I have already limited this work to the comments on seven of Agnon's stories, I shall deal only with interpreters of these stories. The number of these is around twenty, and out of them I shall comment only on nine, who each have written more than one article only and usually on more than one of the seven stories - Dinah Stern is the only one who deals with just one story, but she has devoted a book of a hundred pages to the subject and thus merits being mentioned here.

There is no question about the individuality of the interpreters dealt with below; each one of them has his own style, his own particular comments to make about Agnon and his own attitude towards his works. I have found it very difficult to introduce them in any order of importance or subject-matter, and so it has been done alphabetically.

### Ya'akov Bahat

In the introduction to his book S.Y. Agnon and H. Hazaz (AH) Bahat presents his idea of how analytic study should be done - impartially, by penetrating into the unique world of the analysed piece of work and explaining it through the analysis of the work itself (AH 7). In his interpretation Bahat, then, does not depend on Agnon's background, character, etc. (as other interpreters do, and very much so), but on that of the work and its people's characters. This is how he interprets Agnon's stories, all of which he introduces in more or less the same way: the background, the story, the characters and the relations between them, and the symbolism in the story; at the end there is usually a general comment. Symbolism is a very important part of Bahat's interpretation

of Agnon, and it is mainly based on traditional Jewish sources; he does not, however, overlook Agnon's poetic inclination, and some of the symbols are plainly interpreted on this basis. For instance, in BY an obviously Jewish symbol is fresh water = Torah (AH 31); a less obvious one is the equation of Mazal's poems also with the Law (AH 35). Mintz's trade as a merchant of lentils may go back to Esau's interest in Jacob's lentil stew (ib.); but the explanation of his name as "mint, coin" (AH 36) has nothing to do with Judaism and shows a wider interest both of the author and his critic. The same is seen in Bahat's interpretation of AR: on the one hand he sees in it the classical Jewish problem of the encounter of Yosef and Helene, the seduced with his seducer, the Jewish guest-slave and his European host-enslaver (AH 120); on the other hand the story reminds him of the fairy-tale of Hansle and Gretle with the witch living inside the dark forest (AH 119).

Bahat's comments on EE are made inside the framework of a general chapter about "The Sentimental Dreamer", and so its dreamlike qualities are particularly stressed. A typical symbolism in this context is the equation of the bird Grofit with Orpheus, symbol of poetry as a bridge between life and death (AH 170). In this chapter, much more than in the analysis of separate stories, there is an analysis of Agnon himself, on the basis of the apposition of the letters 'Ayin and Gimel in EE and in other stories (AH 172); and though in explaining the separate stories Bahat is quite systematic and clear, when he tries to explain Agnon's split personality he remains too vague, and shows that he himself cannot penetrate those depths of the soul. Thus the explaining of Grofit = Orfit = Orpheus is, to my mind, very unsatisfactory, and so are other symbols which are not particularly connected with Judaism, like the supposed numerous deaths, physical and mental, in BY (AH 48), or Mintz's

guilt complex (AH 39). Bahat's uncertainties with regard to non-Jewish motifs comes to light when he rejects AR as an allegory, but cannot explain its symbolism:

"Who, actually, is the Lady? Apparently she may be explained as the country which gathers in exiled-wandering strangers for its own good; they develop its ways of life but the host-country does all the hard work. But in the end it kills its fattened animal, either when it has no more need for it or if it is too hungry after a long fast. All this is well understood and appears as historical phenomena; but what is the meaning of the Lady's death, her suicide when she was unsuccessful in killing the pedlar? What is the meaning of the pedlar's inability to find a priest, her burial in the snow, the picking of the birds in her corpse? Does the allegory hint here at recent events in World War II? Agnon leaves here the framework of allegory and arrives at symbolism which has nothing to do with interpretation or meaning because it is an emotional-imaginative vision which has no need of interpretation. This is because the interpretation and the picture are immersed in each other sensuously and thus they act as a revelation" (AH 123-4).

I suggest that poetic vision may be used as a means of interpretation no less successfully than Jewish allegory; Bahat's failure to do so is evidence of his own shortcomings.

#### Arnold (Abraham) Band

In contrast to Bahat's method of explaining Agnon's meaning on the basis of the analysis of his work, Band's self-confessed method includes a number of personal meetings with Agnon and research into the work of his critics. Meeting the author, in my opinion, may sometimes be dangerous for an interpreter, for it can easily mislead the student into fields far removed from the work itself. It is not really possible to judge a work of art from the personality of the artist, and it seems that nobody could be more misleading than Agnon himself; in his "Nostalgia and Nightmare" (NN) Band calls him "the man of many masks" (NN ix). Band favours a historical approach to the study of Agnon's work, which he calls "the correct way" (NN ix), and he criticises the

influence of Kurzweil on early readers of Agnon for his

"neoimpressionism which focuses not upon the work of art, but rather upon certain general, European culture problems that are also manifest in Agnon's fiction" (ib.).

I do not think there is a "correct" approach to any work of art, especially such versatile ones as Agnon's; on the contrary, the more different approaches there are, the better this work can be understood. Besides, although Band's work is monumental for the study of literary history, it bears no great importance with regard to interpreting Agnon.

In his historical approach to Agnon's writing, Band first divides the stories into chronological groups, then he categorizes them according to their subject-matter and approach to life, labelling them accordingly. Too much grouping and labelling is done, in my opinion, by Band; it may have made his hard work of studying the whole range of Agnon's massive and diversified work easier, but it sometimes may mislead the reader: for instance, it may be quite in order to put together "uncollected stories", "folktales" or "parables"; but granted that SM may be described as "the dramatized ego", a clearer definition should be given for the adjective "Gothic" before it is used both as a title for the group of stories including Agunot (Ag - KS II, p. 405) - a story of desperate love of a girl for an artist, - for the atmosphere of death in AR and HD (NN 399; 82), and for the figure of Shoshanah of SE (NN 375). The same may be said about the title "Love and the Cosmos" given for the group of stories including SE, EE and Farenheim (Fr - KS VII, p. 321); Band himself admits that there are no "cosmic problems" in Fr (NN 366), and I can add that there is also very little love in it.

Band's method of analysing Agnon's stories is, in his own words, "linear", i.e., he tells the story bit by bit and explains it at the same time. It seems to help him not to miss any important point Agnon makes; on the other hand it confuses

the picture, which seems patchy and leaves the figures with no real connection with each other or with the various events. (The point is that only rarely does Agnon tell his stories in a chronological order, and following the line of the story instead of the chronological line in the analysis is rather disturbing.) Band's relating of the stories seems a little flat, though he does examine the various motifs and tries to apply his or other critics' interpretations to them. Band has a self-confessed lack of understanding of Agnon, expressed primarily in the phrase quoted above, and in the use of phrases like "strange forces" acting in stories like BY and EE, as has been shown; other interpreters are usually able to find more explicit expressions for these forces. He is also the only one who finds Shoshanah of SE "an enigma"; in my opinion she is an enigma as far as a woman and a divinity can be so, and other interpreters have expressed this idea much better.

On the whole, Band's interpretation of Agnon is more about and around his works, not a really deep and understanding analysis of the stories as they are. An example of his vague way of trying to explain Agnon may be seen in the description of the influence of the sea on Rechnitz in SE:

"Rechnitz's connection with the sea and its plant life is attributed to causes vaguely Freudian and Jungian. The sea evokes the deepest impulses in Rechnitz's psyche, impulses that constitute the integrity of his own personality and tend to keep him away from personal, meaningful involvement with the six girls or, more seriously, with Shoshanah whom he has promised to marry in a childish oath sworn in the consul's garden. The oath, that seems to have the same mystically binding force as the sea, for if we are to accept his story on realistic premises, Rechnitz's bond either to the sea or to Shoshanah would be utterly meaningless; what mature man, particularly a sophisticated scientist, we might ask, would hold himself bound to an oath sworn in childish capriciousness?" (NN 370).

The trouble with Band is that he always attempts to interpret Agnon realistically; a poetic approach would be much more appropriate.

### Baruch Hochman

In contrast to Band, Hochman has not a doubt that he understands Agnon, and especially his faults. In "The Fiction of Agnon" (FA) he divides Agnon's short fiction since the early 1930's into three groups: the brief nightmarish tale, "rather Kafkaesque in technique"; the expressionist tale "directly related to the last volume of Herman Broch's novel 'The Sleepwalkers' but with affinities to the art of Frank Wedekind, Robert Musil, and even the early Bertold Brecht"; and the "self-conscious parables of a quest" (FA 23. Hochman does not illustrate his classification). Much of these works, according to Hochman, is concerned with representing

"either the radically equivocal state of being that arises when one is unwillingly possessed by the past, or when one wilfully tries to recapture it."

To me it seems rather pointless to relate Agnon to a line of writers, with only two of whom - I must confess - I am familiar; Band has already pointed out that Agnon's "Kafkaesque" story of Toiten-Tanz was published several years before Kafka's literary debut (NN 27).

Hochman's interpretation of Agnon's characters tends to move away from both the Jewish-traditional and the psychological into the realm of the supernatural. In this I find him grasping to the full Agnon's poetic ability, as it is beautifully expressed in his description of Shoshanah in SE:

"She is identified (for Rechnitz) with the moon, the sea, the tides - with the great, agitated mother of all being, all desire" (FA 4).

Hochman may be the only interpreter who sees the sea in this story as identified with Shoshanah rather than her adversary (this is also my view, as shown in Chapter 3).

Hochman criticises Agnon's writing as being too involved with "haunting inwardness" which limits his achievement as a writer and prevents him from a confrontation with subjective and objective



realities (FA 2-3).

"He is not a mere aesthete; his work is too rich and too deeply engaged with some aspects of reality for him to be seen as one .... but he does not achieve a vigorous substantive engagement with the ultimate implications of his experience".

It is difficult for me to argue with Hochman on this point, for the satisfaction from a piece of literature depends on the individual reader. There is no doubt that Hochman's literary appreciation of Agnon is the deepest and most conclusive amongst Agnon's interpreters.

### Baruch Kurzweil

Kurzweil's approach to Agnon is as to a modern writer, in contrast to earlier Jewish critics who saw in him a religious Jewish writer. For him, as seen in his "Essays on Agnon" (MA), Agnon is a pure epicist of Jewish life

"with no didactical intentions, no battle-cries, no anti-religious affectation and without the pathos of the religious fanatic" (MA 6);

he submits to the reality of the Jewish town "as to a natural datum". But the epic idyll is misleading; the apparent simplicity of "anti heroes" like Isaac Kummer forces the reader to ponder on the meaning of this simplicity and not to evaluate it in the conventional way (MA 15). The tension in the story is not between the heroes and the world outside, but inside the heroes themselves,

"caused by the ruling of their inner individualistic destiny and their inner Jewish destiny";

on the basis of this inner conflict Kurzweil has founded his interpretation of Agnon.

One of Kurzweil's interests in Agnon is the "artistic vision" of the author; and it is about the writer as an artist that he complains at the overuse of his "technique of riddles" which is not "an artistic necessity" (MA 140). So he dwells on certain chief motifs, for instance: leaving the safety of the home and

town and going into the loneliness and desolation of the "forest, the remnant of nature in its precivilization condition"; the generation gap; the key which opens the renewal of the old world of tradition. One problematic motif is relations with women for the traditional-modern man; another is the "demonic forces" ready to trap the religious innocent or the uncaredful.

Kurzweil is fond of regarding characters and expressions in Agnon as symbols, the interpretation of which swings between the Jewish-traditional and the poetic-supernatural. His essays are rather disconnected and are not as systematic as Bahat's or Band's; nor is his evaluation as conclusive as Hochman's. However, more than any other interpreter he has an insight into the conflict revealed in Agnon's works between the poet yearning for the dangerous freedom of nature and love, and the observant Jew who feels safe in the strictness of his tradition.

#### S.Y. Penueli

In some ways Penueli's method of dealing with Agnon's works in "Agnon's Work" (YA) is similar to that of Band's: he writes more about and around the work; he also puts in his analysis a great many of his own thoughts and ideas. On the other hand, he is no more systematic than Kurzweil, and like him he deals more with subjects and motifs than with stories, as do Band and Bahat. Bahat, even when writing on a general subject, deals with one subject at a time; Penueli always jumps from one subject to another, from one story to another, in a very confusing way. One of Penueli's great faults, in my opinion, is the use of terms without a clear definition of them. One such word is "Eros", which is used in opposition to love, to affection, to natural love leading to motherhood, to lust or sexual attraction (YA 37-38), as has been shown in Chapter 3 IV. Another undefined term is "myth", as may be seen in the following passage:

"The treatment of love in Israel, which is similar to the treatment of myth, has brought about some fine chapters in the Hebrew story .... In Agnon's stories love cannot occur even if it is proper according to the Law. And when it occurs it is condemned to death and bereavement. As is known, Berdiczevski calls for myth in most of his stories, and the myth enters and turns them in a way which is very strange to the traditional life of Jewish existence .... Agnon, as is well known, rejects myth in most of his stories, but it, the myth, is attached to Agnon, and it comes uninvited .... it is not apparent but very much felt .... masquerading in the traditional clothes of recent past" (YA 48-49).

(It should be admitted that I have come to a similar conclusion, appearing at the end of Chapter 8; I hope, though, that my definition of "myth" is more exact.) Penueli's statement about love in Agnon is contradicted in his article SP<sub>r</sub> in the journal Gazit about the poetic ending of SE; still, according to him "love" in AS turns into a scroll of Law, in Ag into a holy arc and in BY into poems which are burned with the burning of the soul of Leah who loves, and dies because of her love "in the prime of her life". A further inconsistency in Penueli is shown in his saying that any rebellion found in Agnon is a rebellion in order to free love from traditional constrictions.

Penueli is probably the interpreter who uses the least symbolism. Instead, he uses endless comparisons with other works of literature, both Jewish and non-Jewish. For him Agnon is primarily an artist who "writes stories for their own sake" (YA 139); Agnon's Jewishness is only a side issue, with additional problems as well as a special flavour to his works.

### Dov Sadan

Not a single interpreter of Agnon, however much he is drawn to his poetry, can disregard Agnon's Jewishness; but there are quite a few interpreters who overlook his poetry and see in Agnon nothing but a Jew whose fights and conflicts are carried on inside Judaism. Sadan is one of the latter, and there is nothing

in his interpretation which is not based on either Jewish psychology or Jewish symbolism. According to Sadan (AA 19) Nature also appears in Agnon as Jewish, a part of the whole Jewish life and it even behaves according to the Jewish world. A symptom, or a result, of this attitude is that Sadan examines the more "Jewish" of Agnon's stories, which are either an expression for escapism back to the traditional life, or based on Jewish motifs - at least according to Sadan - like SE. It is significant that Sadan's interpretation of two stories which some interpreters consider as remote from Judaism as possible - SE and HD - is based on Jewish motifs (s. Chapter 3 I and V).

According to Sadan the poet Hemdat, a Galician who is one of the pioneers in Jaffa, appearing in TS and in Giv'at ha-Hol (GH) - "Sand Hill" (KS III, p. 351), represents Agnon himself. Sadan's complaint against Agnon is the weakness with which he portrays this image of Hemdat,

"who is of a shaky and weak, almost evaporating,  
individuality",

in contrast to the authors Berdiczevski and Brenner who are

"strong in shaping their own image" (AA 14).

According to Sadan the strength of the last two writers is a result of early conflict in their parents' homes. In his words,

"when you see the softness of Hemdat in Bi-Ne'areinu ubi-Zeqeneinu (BB - KS III, p. 273) in proximity to the strength of the figure of his grandfather, then you can understand the secret of their creator (or 'then you can be in the company of their creator'; the Hebrew word "sod" has this double meaning. TB). Forming his own image inside the circle of his generation he is seen in his smallness, while in his painting of the portrait of his father and grandfather you see his work in its most elevation and exaltation" (AA 15).

Evidently, Sadan's demand from Agnon is to be a good Jewish writer on the model of others before him.

Sadan comments on the fact that Agnon's critics recoil

from searching into his peculiar use of the Hebrew language, which is no less unique than his dealing with Jewish subjects (AA 189). Being as good as his word, Sadan examines some of Agnon's stories from the point of view of the language, a thing which is quite rare in the works of Agnon's interpreters. There are, of course, some such examinations by other critics, who cannot be called "interpreters" of Agnon.

### Dinah Stern

Before I deal with Stern's interpretation of Agnon I must make a comment on her habit of using expressions which seem to me to be totally inappropriate to use in an objective work of interpretation or any other kind of commentary. Such expressions show Stern as intolerant of any other interpretation and put her work in an unfavourable pretentious light. Here are some examples of these expressions: five times Stern uses the phrase "on the face of it .... but in fact"; on page 54 in her "The Betrayal and its Lesson" (BL), for instance, there is a description of a trivial conversation between Rechnitz and the Consul (Stern's only story-subject is SE):

"Under the mask of an offhand old people's talk the Consul throws a grave accusation against Jacob, 'Have you found any interesting people?' thus hinting at Jacob's traitorous walk with the girls of Jaffa in front of Shoshanah .... On the face of it it seems that Jacob's answer refers only to the outward question: 'Where can't you find interesting people?' .... But in fact his words are also equivocal, i.e., to the Consul's accusation he answers that it is better to be on the move and multilateral and not stuck with one interest."

(All the underlining is mine, T.B.) Twice Stern uses the expression "this means nothing but" and twice "it may be assumed that"; in this way she transfers the meaning of Shoshanah's illness to symbolize Jacob's himself being ill (BL 57). Other expressions which are hard to accept from an interpreter are "Agnon said this or that only in order to" (say something else); or "the author

creates on purpose an illusion of similar situations." For Stern "it is quite clear that Rachel's mentioning of the title 'queen of Africa' is said not in exaltation but to humiliate Shoshanah" (BL 39). It seems that Agnon is an open book for Dinah Stern, in the greatest opposition to Band, to whom Agnon is as great an enigma as Shoshanah herself.

Stern is the most partial of all Agnon's interpreters, and she ascribes to him feelings which no other interpreter has found in Agnon. With regard to the problem of maintaining Jewish tradition in the modern world, which according to some interpreters forms the background to SE, the feelings which have been found in Agnon include nostalgia, rejection, conflict, sadness, frustration. Stern is the only one who adds the feeling of hate, concerning Jews who have forsaken the traditions of their ancestors; she expresses this hate in phrases like the following:

"Love is revealed as murderous hate" (BL 11);

or

"Jacob's wish to free himself from the chains of the oath .... causes him to rise against it,"

to deny and to mock it, and

"the denial and mockery turn into a hidden hostility" (BL 26). I doubt if I have ever found the word hate in Agnon's stories, even in more cruel stories than SE.

Stern's interpretation is built on symbols, some of which are straightforward, like the translation of the name of Gotthold Ehrlich as "the straight and supporting God" (BL 52); the understanding of Jacob as the people of Israel (BL 17), etc. Some symbols are explained in a roundabout way, for instance, the modelling of Rachel's joke of the "African queen" on the Biblical Blessing of Moses, with the link in the form of African Sinai (BL 40). But some of the symbols are so far fetched that they border on the absurd. Band has commented on the danger of overuse of symbolism (NN 368); in Stern this overuse has reached its peak in the

comparison of the six Jaffa girls to demons. Stern notes (BL 34) the features of demons as mentioned in the homilies: they

"have wings, fly from one end of the world to the other, and listen behind the curtain".

On this description she bases her idea of the girls' demonic character: Rayah is demonic because she 'covers herself like a bird covering itself with its wings' - thus compared to the winged demons. On Leah it is said that 'good angels dwell in her eyes'; according to Stern this is said in irony, and the winged angels mark Leah as a demon. She has another demonic feature in that she knows miraculously where Jacob is and what he is doing at any given time, as if she was listening "behind the curtain". Tamar is also a demon because she is compared to the hoopoe bird - again a reference to wings. Mirah, the swift rider and runner, says before the race that she 'would like to run from one end of the world to the other', which shows, according to Stern, that she too is a demon. Rachel does not seem to have any special demonic feature, but she is full of "poison and hate towards Shoshanah" (BL 41).

It is possible to sum up Stern's attitude in a passage from her book:

"The (happy) end of the story is most difficult to understand, for it absolutely contradicts the spirit of the work and its inner moral consistency. Everyone who knows Agnon's attitude towards the oath, the almost magic power he attributes to it and the consistency with which he leads his traitorous heroes to their tragic end, would be amazed at the change of things for Jacob Rechnitz, who betrayed without being punished. This deep contradiction between the nature of the literal story and its inner truth forces us to look for a different ending for it, a shattering tragic ending which would befit its moral lesson".

This passage shows clearly that the whole idea of the crime of betrayal and the need for punishment in SE is Stern's own invention.

Stern interpreted only one of Agnon's many stories; in

this one she is not less conclusive than Hochman, though it is on the level of feelings rather than on that of literary appreciation. I wonder whether Agnon was as conclusive in his feelings as she is.

#### Meshulam Tochner

Like Sadan, Tochner also sees Agnon first and foremost as a Jewish writer, and it is significant that it is Sadan who wrote the introduction to Tochner's book "Interpreting Agnon" (PA) which was published after its author's death. The problem Agnon deals with, according to Tochner, is the problem of the decline of the authority of the Law which is connected with the decline of the authority of the father; the two were inseparable in Jewish tradition (PA 239). As a result of analysing the conflict between the generation of authority and the generation of rebellion against it, Tochner reaches the conclusion that

"the breaking off from ancestral tradition and turning away from the duties of the Halakhah ("traditional ruling"), with the still inadaptably reality of Jewish orthodoxy, have caused a frustrating confusion in the secular camp with regard to pure faith. It was, then, impossible that the reference to religion in modern Hebrew literature together with the evaluation of the shattered reality according to the Halakhah, would be free of a sparkle of irony and would be able to be formulated in a straightforward unambiguous way as was the confessional autobiography of the first wave of revived (Hebrew) literature" (PA 246).

Tochner seems here to be trying to justify one of Agnon's most characteristic features in writing, his irony. He goes on to say that the spiritual crisis of authority is the only one in Judaism which necessitated such drastic measures as irony in literature; catastrophes like blood libels, pogroms, the holocaust of World War II, having been mere physical crises, could be expressed in literature in a straightforward way (ib.).

According to Tochner Agnon's special attraction for the



modern Jewish reader is his ability to describe perfectly two contrasting environments: that of the old life in eastern Europe and that of the new life in Palestine. According to him no poetic quality of the writer could compete with that ability for the interest of the reader (PA 172). We have seen, however, that the writings of other interpreters of Agnon easily contradict this statement, even where Jewish readers are concerned.

Tochner's way of interpreting Agnon is quite different from that of Sadan, who deals basically with motifs. Tochner deals with symbols, and he can almost compete with Stern for the overuse of these symbols. Thus in his examination of the story of A0 he hardly leaves one word unturned and unexplained. (In that story the first two letters of Agnon's name, 'Ayin and Gimel, appear in an even greater number than in EE, for Agnon uses them not only for names but also for common words; the content of the story is immaterial for our purpose.) It is, however, easier to believe Tochner than Stern with regard to the conclusion about Agnon's attitude towards the problems we encounter in his stories; for Stern's interpretation is almost as poetic as Agnon's original, and because of this it is often independent of it. Tochner's interpretation is dry and technical, with very little poetic insight; sometimes he seems to be treating artistic creation as if it were a piece of engineering, with every step carefully calculated beforehand and very little room allowed for inspiration. Stern's book makes a much more interesting reading.

### Efraim Zoref

One word which can describe Zoref in connection with Agnon is naive; his attitude towards Agnon is like that of a "hasid" to his "tsadiq", expecting him all the time to perform miracles, as in Agnon's autobiographical sketch Ve-lo nikashel (LN) - "Let us not Stumble" (KS II, p. 289); in this story Agnon tells how he miraculously succeeded in preventing a Jewish girl from marrying

outside Judaism. Zoref's attitude towards Agnon's writings is compared by him to Agnon's attitude towards holy books.

Zoref is not actually an interpreter of Agnon; his book "The Man and his Work" (IY) is more of a biography, complemented by descriptions from Agnon's stories in their suitable places and commented on by the biographer; only here and there he adds his own interpretation of some symbolic language, as in his telling of SE (s. below). His way of dealing with Agnon's stories is telling them with elaboration and explanation, the approach of which is a combination of poetry and Judaism. Thus, nothing is said about the irony in AS, as it is seen by Band and Penueli; in his naivety it is apparently impossible for Zoref to see anything in such a story but the simplicity of the poet. He compares the figure of Rafael with that of Ben-Uri, the artist from Ag, in the words:

"In the figure of Ben-Uri 'whose soul is hidden in the arc and he himself is like an empty vessel', the soul of the artist himself is incarnated, with all its stirrings and torments, as it was later reflected in Rafael the Scribe, 'who would reach excitement and devotion till sparks of ink would escape from his pen, because of the shaking of creation, and he could not write one straight letter'" (IY 80).

In the same way SE is retold as a pure love story: Jacob's love for his work with seaweeds is nothing but a reflection of his early-day love for Shoshanah, who appeared to him once then as a mermaid with her hair covered with seaweeds and to whom he swore an oath of faithfulness (IY 84). Zoref's description of Agnon is as

"a poet of devoutness and suppressed ecstasy. Out of these he reaches piety (hasidut). Look at the piety of Agnon and you can reach the pioneering spirit (halutsiyut). They both exist side by side and one inside the other in a mutual attraction; the one (pioneering) takes its Shabbatic inspiration from the other, and the other (piety) takes from the former its inspiration of action and yearning for redemption and immigration (aliyah). They both carry in them the sorrow of the exiled Shekhinah and the shame of a nation

whose humiliation reaches hell; they both turn their faces towards love of Israel and devotion to the Land of Israel" (IY 184).

May be a little naivety is what interpreters need when they write about Agnon.

In nine interpreters we have seen nine different ways of interpreting Agnon: the poetic and the technical; the European and the Jewish, etc. Band has put it in the phrase

"each critic found in Agnon what he was looking for", probably with a feeling of reproach and not of complete acceptance; for me it is a demonstration of Agnon's greatness.

## PART II

### MOTIFS FROM THE MYTHS OF THE GREAT GODDESS

#### IN AGNON

#### 5. INTRODUCTION

This analysis of the said motifs in Agnon is based mainly on Robert Graves's books 'The White Goddess' (WG) and 'The Greek Myths' (GM); supplementary comparisons are made with other books of mythology, as well as some natural history books and the Hebrew Bible.

The long heading is in itself an indication that it is not a real interpretation of Agnon, i.e. I do not ascribe to him conscious knowledge in using these motifs as such, and consequently I cannot presume to say that, in saying certain things, Agnon meant or referred to other certain things, as interpreters often do. On the contrary: I think the case of Agnon is the same as that of other European poets, by whom, according to Graves (WG 12),

"poetry of a magical quality is still occasionally written .... as a result of an inspired, almost pathological, reversion to the original language (of symbols) - a wild Pentecostal 'speaking with tongues' - rather than from a conscientious study of its grammar and vocabulary."

This language includes letters which are the initials of names of trees, calendars made up of trees, birds, animals and natural events, etc. Thus, being a true poet, Agnon instinctively writes about "the Single Theme of Poetry" which, according to Graves's definition, is the essence of "Life, Death and Love" - in general, but specifically that of the Spirit of the Year (s. below p. 88), with whom he identifies himself, and who is the son and lover of the

White Goddess, the Triple Muse who is incarnated in every woman he loves (WG 24).

I must stress that at first, when starting my study of SE in doing my B.A., I did not look for any such motifs in Agnon; I would never imagine to find any in such a pre-dominately Jewish writer. But after reading the story once I was overwhelmed by the unexpected treasure of motifs parallel to those in The White Goddess, which I was translating into Hebrew at the time. I soon sat down to put these comparisons in writing, in an article which was subsequently published in a Hebrew magazine. (Having been shown this article, Agnon expressed his interest and his wish to see me and discuss its ideas. Unfortunately his wife was ill at the time and the meeting could not be arranged. Later he himself became ill, and died not long afterwards.) Reading other stories by Agnon I have found no end to that treasure of parallels. Here I shall mention only the main motifs, as appearing in a few of Agnon's stories, (hoping one day to publish a book on this subject). The demonstration of some of these motifs may bring a solution for some of the most problematic of Agnon's symbols which have baffled his best interpreters.

The Goddess, from whose myths motifs are found in Agnon, is a goddess of everything connected both with nature and with the life of man; her figure includes all the goddesses and aspects of them of any mythology in existence. She is basically a triple goddess and her appearances are usually in a triad. This idea is based on the three appearances of the moon, for her original manifestation is in the moon: The young, growing crescent; the full, mature disc; the waning old crescent. The moon is the queen of the sky, and the full triad of queens is complemented by the motherly queen of the earth and the sea, and the wise old queen of

death and the underworld. The basic colour of the Goddess is white, the colour of the moon (one of whose Hebrew names is "white" - levanah - in the female form); amongst the rest this colour expresses the purity of virginity, the fruitfulness of the yellow-white grains of corn, and the deadliness of the white snow in winter, thus again forming a triad. Other sacred colours, to complete a group of three, are red - the colour of heat, fire and blood, and consequently of the midsummer Goddess of Love and Battle; and black (or dark blue) - the colour of the impenetrability and imperceptibility of night and death. It will be noticed that though the colours white, red and black form a triad of virginity, love and wisdom, each of them also expresses death, which is one of the most important manifestations of life; it is also one of the most important themes of Agnon's stories, and even his most "Jewish" stories which are almost free of other motifs are not free of the idea of death.

A full title given to the Goddess by Graves (WG 187) is the Goddess of Death-in-Life (whose lover dies in the middle of his life and love) and of Life-in-Death (whose dead lover is promised an eternal after-death existence, and whose son is born out of the death of his predecessor). I hope to show this particular involvement of life and death in Agnon's heroines, who may be seen as different aspects of the Goddess.

## 6. THE SPIRIT OF THE YEAR

### I

Graves's idea of the Spirit of the Year is that the Goddess as a ruler of the earth rules also over the seasons of the year. The man who marries her priestess and representative on earth becomes a king, and his life is tied to the seasons of the year: he is born (ritually) at the beginning of the year (mid-winter, spring or autumn); acquires his strength in the spring, with the strengthening of the sun (or with the growth of vegetation in winter, as in Palestine, for instance); marries his bride at midsummer; rests in late summer; dies with the death of the year (late, hot summer, or late autumn). This myth was usually presented in the form of a drama in festivals of the New Year. When the God of the Year died he usually became an ancestral god-of-the-dead, or a king of the underworld. There are some variations on this myth: firstly, the number of seasons may differ from one place to another and vary from two to five; secondly, the year may be divided between two kings, and when the one has married the bride and impregnated her he is killed by his co-ruler, or twin, who becomes king until the end of the year, then to be killed in turn by the reborn spirit of his victim. The two are thus the Spirits of the Waxing Year and of the Waning Year (GM I 250).

Another variation in the myth is when the life of the king is lengthened, and instead of really being killed at the end of his term he is only ritually killed, and is ritually reborn for another period; in that case a substitute sacrifice is made in the form of a child or an animal. If then there are two of them, they rule alternately for some years, each during one half of the year. (The myth of the Twins, then, is an extension of the myth of the Spirit of the Year.)

More than in any other story by Agnon, in HD (KS III 429) the motif of the Spirit of the Year is prominent; the life of the hero Yohanan is connected with the changing seasons of the year. But his figure is that of the God of the Waning Year, connected in life with the dead season of winter, and in death with the awakening of spring. Thus the background of the story is the cemetery, in the description of which many themes from the Goddess myths are apparent:

1. The cemetery is situated on a hill (HD 429), i.e. the dead are buried inside the hill. In prehistoric times heroes, or kings, were often buried inside hills, or artificial mounds. Graves describes in detail (WG 102 f.) the Irish mound of New-Grange, which was one such grave; from such mounds the spirits of the dead heroes used to come out for an airing. (A hero is a God of the Year who has married the priestess-representative of the goddess Hera and has been so titled after her name.) In Agnon these are not heroes but the ghosts of maiden girls who come out of their graves to dance at night (HD 430).

Agnon calls the cemetery "fields of life" (HD 429). This name is reminiscent of the Elysian Fields, which were the place where heroes went after their death. Graves identifies the Elysian Fields ("the fields of the goddess Alys" according to him) with King Arthur's burial island of Avalon, where an apple orchard used to grow (WG 254, 262, 314). Agnon also makes Yohanan, the grave-watcher, spend his leisure time under apple trees (HD 429).

Graves describes how in New Grange a priestess of the dead, "the Woman of the Hill", used to wail in prophetic anticipation whenever anyone of royal blood was about to die. In Agnon's description (HD 435) a mad girl, "whose bridegroom was killed in the forest", used to come and "bewail her



virginity" at night in the cemetery, after "roaming the town, in the markets and the streets like a lunatic". There are a few motifs in this description. First, the expression "bewail her virginity" is taken from the Biblical story about the daughter of Jephthah (Jud. XI 38); according to Graves (WG 303), the annual mourning of Jephthah's daughter was an excuse, used by the Jewish girls to conceal their forbidden continuation of the mourning of the dying God of the Year in the figure of Tammuz. The wailing girl in Agnon is a counterpart both of the Jewish girls and of the Woman of the Hill, probably anticipating Yohanan's own death which comes shortly after. Second, the expression about roaming the town is taken from Biblical Canticles, where the Shulamite is looking thus for her lover (Can. III 2). In his article "The Fertility Cult in Hosea" (AJ XIVIII 77-78) H.G. May identifies the Shulamite with goddesses like Ishtar, Isis and Aphrodite who went in search of their dead lovers Tammuz, Osiris and Adonis respectively (all vegetation gods whose lives were connected with the seasons of the year) in the "city of the dead" which is the underworld.

In the winter two animals of death appear in the cemetery in HD: a raven and a dog (HD 434). The dog is both the emblem of the bitch-headed Death Goddess Hecate (WG 376), and a companion to Hermes or Gabriel as messenger of Sheol (the Hebrew underworld) (WG 151). The raven, or crow, was the prophetic bird of the Death Goddess Athene (WG 52, 376). The white snow in this picture is a fitting background for a scene of death.

Living in the cemetery, Yohanan is the king of the dead even before his actual death; his life resembles the sort of existence conducted by Gods of the Year like Cronos (a crow god) and Osiris (a vegetation god) who after being killed by

their rivals came to dwell in the Underworld. Even his basic food is mushrooms (HD 429), which were ambrosia, according to Graves, or the food of the gods, i.e. of the dead (WG 167, 334) - gods being the spirits of dead ancestors and the king being considered the father of his tribe; the dead kings of Egypt held the title of Osiris.

The figure of Yohanan is reminiscent of that of Reshef, the Palestinian God of the Underworld (LC 133), "the power of pestilence and death", who is identified (LC 137) with Mot (Baal's rival in Ugaritic mythology) - "the power of drought and death" who dwells in the Underworld. In Agnon's description, when Yohanan goes to town, "the sun burns fiercely (Mot's rule was at the time of the hot summer of Palestine) and the town remains feverish all that day ... the air vanishes from the land and there is no breeze for breathing" (HD 429).

2. In other places in the story there are motifs from the myth of Dionysus the kid (WG 218), who was sacrificed in honour of his Goddess Mother Rhea in the autumn festival of the New Year (a different figure from Dionysus the wine, son of the Moon Goddess Semele). Thus, when Tsilah serves the party at the Festival of Willows which is adjacent to the autumnal New Year, "a drop of blood glowed from between her fingers" (HD 433), as if she were one of the nine moon-priestesses who took part in tearing Dionysus to pieces and devouring him (WG 399). In the same context a song is sung: "Moses is dead, so who will not die?", and Graves identifies the figure of Moses with that of Dionysus as a Spirit of the Year (WG 292). To complete the correlation of the motifs, Yohanan is described as wearing goat-skin (HD 435), and so may himself be identified with Dionysus the kid. In WG 404 there is a description of another scene connected with the same myth, where "a goat-king was mated to the Goddess,

sacrificed and resurrected; that is to say, the priestess had public connection with the annual king dressed in goat-skin."

3. If Yohanan is the Spirit of the Year, the king who becomes a god after his death, then Tsilah must be the Goddess, whom he marries. Indeed, Tsilah's description fits well the various aspects of the Goddess. First of all, she is beautiful; "there was nowhere so beautiful a girl as Tsilah" (HD 441) are Agnon's words. This is also a Biblical phrase, where it is applied to the figures of Sarah, Rachel, Tamar, Abishag, the Shulamite, and Esther. All these women are identified with various goddesses: Sarah, the ancient mother of Israel, is said by Graves (WG 161) to be "a laughing sea-goddess of the kind of Aphrodite"; Tamar, Abshalom's sister or daughter, was "the Hebrew equivalent of the Great Goddess Ishtar" (WG 190); Rachel was a dove goddess (WG 161) - the Moon Goddess of Asiatic Palestine was worshipped with doves (WG 337); the Shulamite has already been shown as Isis etc., and some commentators of the Bible identify her with Abishag the Shunamite, King David's mistress (BDB 1002); Esther is identified even in the Jewish Aggadah with the planet Venus-Ishtar and with the moon (SA 115).

Yohanan first sees Tsilah "sitting on a wooden box ... wearing an open red-scarlet dress ... her hair is long and black with a golden arrow in it" (HD 440). It is then the heat of summer, and Tsilah's figure resembles that of the midsummer Goddess of Love and Battle, when compared with the description of her in the ballad of Sir Gawain's Marriage: "I see a lady where she sate .... she was clad in red scarlet" (WG 180). The golden arrow recalls on the one hand the "golden bough" in Sir J. Frazer's book by that name, which was a golden fruit-bearing bough of mistletoe; on the other hand the arrow that killed the Norse Sun-god Balder at midsummer

was mistletoe (WG 40). On this occasion in HD Tsilah gives Yohanan a honey-cake; she may then represent the midsummer Bee Goddess who kills her lover after mating (WG 192). It will be noticed that Yohanan is favoured at this time of the year, not killed; he thus may be identified again not with the God of the Waxing Year (as Balder was) but with that of the Waning Year.

A further description of Tsilah, which states that "the light on her cheeks is like the moonlight" (HD 441), identifies her with the Moon Goddess; Caliope, "Beautiful Face", was the original Muse in her full-moon aspect (WG 391).

Tsilah's death is most peculiar, for it is not described as such; rather as a sort of transference from the world of the living to that of the dead (HD 438). In that she corresponds to Persephone, who after being kidnapped by Hades became the Queen of the Underworld. On the other hand Persephone is identified with the Death Goddess Hecate or Athene (WG 173, 376) who, as the Moon Goddess of autumn and winter, would naturally marry the God of the Waning Year, while Artemis as the Moon Goddess of spring and summer would marry the God of the Waxing Year (GM I 251).

Preparing Tsilah for her marriage with Yohanan, the dead girls "anoint her body with women's cosmetics" (HD 438). This phrase is also Biblical, and taken from the text about beautifying Esther before her meeting with the king. Tsilah is thus again identified with Esther, and with the goddess Ishtar.

4. Telling the story "linearly" (to use Band's expression) is also telling it chronologically, in the order of the changing seasons; it is thus possible to show how the chronological events are tied with these changes. The story begins with the heat of summer (HD 429), probably just after

midsummer; Yohanan is in full vigour, rests under the trees or goes to town at will. There he meets Tsilah (HD 430) who favours him with a honey-cake. Landmarks in the story are first drought and heat; then the fast of Ab (August); then the Feast of Willows (October) (HD 432). On this occasion Tsilah is seen with "bloody hands", reminiscent of Dionysus's death. Significantly, a child dies at that time (HD 434), which may be a surrogate for Yohanan, a New Year victim; the death of the child is connected with the autumn rains. Then the winter with its snow comes, and the dead season of the year. Yohanan is very much alive at that time, walking about at night, singing (HD 435). The next stage is spring, bringing to Yohanan weariness of life and a wish to die (HD 437). This he can do only when Tsilah, whose own death has made her a Death Goddess, comes to collect him. She does it at the time when the sun is shining, goats are roaming about and the dead girls mourn the dead snow (HD 442-7); the season of growth is the time for the God of the Waning Year to die.

5. There are in this story additional motifs from the Great Goddess myths, which though adding nothing to the theme of the Spirit of the Year, may be seen as strengthening the general idea. For example, the apple and pear trees under which Yohanan rests were both sacred to the Goddess: the wild pear-tree was sacred to Hera as the prime Moon Goddess of the Peloponese because it gives fruit in May, the month of enforced chastity (s. below p. 123 and GM I 236); the apple was sacred to the Love Goddess (Aphrodite, Olwen, Eve) as a symbol of the immortality of the young king after his death, having previously been her lover (WG 257).

The myrtle, used at Tsilah's death (HD 438) was the tree of the Goddess of Life-in-Death: as an evergreen tree it was the token of the resurrection of the dead king of the year (WG 262).

In the tree alphabet-calendar it was the last tree of the year, belonging to the death-month (WG 193); so that besides Tsilah's death, it may also signify Yohanan's death.

The goats, which seem always to be present at the cemetery, were sacred to the triad of the Great Goddess comprising Amalthea as a virgin goddess; Rhea, the Mother Goddess; and Athene, Goddess of Death and Wisdom (WG 218).

At his death Yohanan's head is washed with an egg (HD 447). This is another symbol of resurrection, as is the egg eaten at Easter (WG 330). It is notable that the hope of resurrection after death is often present in Agnon, especially in connection with the seasons of the year (s. below, Fr and BB).

6. The dead girls who come out of their graves to dance at night have white feet. So had Thetis (Il XVIII 127, 146), the Sea Goddess who became Achilles' mother; Olwen (FSS 129), who was a Celtic May Queen identified with the Flower Goddess Blodeuwedd (WG 41); and the White-toes girl in Scandinavian myths, who was a sort of Cinderella and became a Lake Goddess after drowning (SL 42).

The last motif has little to do with the Spirit of the Year, but great importance in the Goddess myths in general. This is the nine-branch candlestick which was standing on the table at the undertakers' feast on the Festival of Willows (HD 433). There is a roundabout connection between the candlestick ("menorah") and the number nine: this number was sacred to the Muse (WG 182), and the number of lunar wisdom (WG 251); the tree of wisdom is the hazel, the Jewish counterpart of which is the almond (WG 263); and the traditional menorah in the Tabernacle was made in the form of almond branches and flowers (Ex XXV 31). Nine gold candlesticks also stood on the table of Iubdan, king of the Lepra and the Lepracaun in Irish mythology (FSS 28).

## II

The motif of the Spirit of the Year appears, in my opinion, also in TS (KS V), but only in connection with the hero, Isaac Kummer's death. This idea is connected with the continuous associations between Isaac and dogs, especially the one dog which causes his death and so corresponds to the dog of Hermes, or Gabriel, messengers of the Death Goddess who led the souls of her victims to the Underworld (WG 151). According to Graves the three-headed dog Cerberus, guardian of the Underworld, was none other than the bitch-headed triple Death Goddess Hecate (GM I 130). The aspect that makes Isaac's death a ritual one, connected with sacrificing the Spirit of the Year in order to enhance the fecundity of the land, is the falling of "beneficial rains" soon after this death (TS 606). Concerning this idea of death, a chapter in Frazer's book 'The Golden Bough' (GB 426) elaborates on customs of sacrifice, human or animal, as a rain-making charm. In Palestine the rains are particularly connected on the one side with fruitfulness and on the other with the beginning of the year in the autumn. Thus the Festival of Willows, which is adjacent to the New Year, used to include special rites of rain-making with sheep sacrifice. One of the necessary characteristics of the victims was their being "innocent" or "wholesome"; this characteristic is ascribed by Agnon to Isaac, using the same Hebrew word "tamim" (TS 153). In his book 'Man and Temple' (MT 44) Rafael Patai notes that human sacrifice, later changed to animal sacrifice (as with Elijah in I Kings XVIII 33), was performed in times of drought. Agnon describes the time of Isaac's death as very hot,

"the sun burns hot and powerful, kindling the grass, causing trees to wither, and drying up all springs of water" (TS 606);

there is no sign of the rains which are supposed to begin

falling at the New Year in October even by the end of December (TS 559), the time of the Christian New Year. But soon after Isaac's death the sun is covered with heavy clouds, the wind brings lightning and thunder, and continuous rains fall and fill the water-holes. The land then becomes a godly garden (TS 607).

### III

A figure of the Death Goddess who kills and eats her (annual) husbands appears in the character of Helen in AR (KS VI 92). The title Agnon has given her, "Adonit", (which is the feminine form of the names of divinities like Adonai and Adonis), translated into English as 'Lady', recalls other titles of the Goddess: Lady of the Wild Things (WG 422), Lady of the Lake (WG 439), and White Lady (WG 24). As to her name, Helene, it is the name of the Goddess of Death and Resurrection, Helen, or Helle, identified with Persephone (WG 257); it also appears in Helen of the Trees, or Ariadne (GM I 263), a fertility goddess to whom human sacrifice was given, torn to pieces by delirious women; the Lady also lives in the forest, causes rains to fall and "eats human flesh and drinks men's blood" (AR 96). Helene's blue eyes sparkle like the blade of a new knife (AR 98); Graves's White Goddess's eyes are "startlingly blue" (WG 24); she calls herself a bitch (AR 96), thus identifying herself with Hecate (WG 173).

Other motifs appear in the story, connected with the figure of Yosef the pedlar. He is a wanderer, who later becomes a labourer, then Helene's lover (AR 93-95). It fits Graves's description (GM I 15) of the times when

"royal women thought nothing of taking lovers from among their serfs, and princesses would marry foreigners or commoners."

But she calls him "a craftsman" ("uman" in Hebrew), and according



to Graves the Triple Goddess Brigit - "the High One" - who was the original Muse, was also the goddess of craftsmanship (WG 394). As such, she pays him not with money but with hot mead (AR 93), the fitting reward for a lover of the Muse (WG 210), and the drink on which Cronos as the Spirit of the Year feasted on his "happy island" with the nine priestesses after his death (WG 419). Also Yosef is called by Helene "my raven (or crow), my eagle" (AR 96), which are two emblems of the Spirit of the Year: the eagle is that of Llew-Llaw-Gyffs as a sun-god (WG 319); the raven is that of Cronos as God of the Dead; Llew-Llaw was a prince betrayed by his wife Blodeuwedd and killed by her lover with her help. On another occasion in AR the Lady tells Yosef that "his hair stands on end like pig's bristles" (AR 98). The pig was the sacred animal of the Death Goddess Circe, or Cerridwen, a parallel to Hecate (WG 173, 376); and "standing of the hair on end" occurs, according to Graves (WG 24) when there is a feeling of the fearful presence of the Goddess.

Lastly there is the hunters' knife Yosef sells to the Lady, with which she tries to kill him (AR 102). The word 'hunter' is reminiscent of the title Huntress of the goddess Artemis (WG 10), whose priestess "took a yearly consort ... (who) was sacrificed at the close of his term of office (as king)" (WG 128).

## 7. THE MYTH OF THE TWINS

About the myth of the Twins Graves says (WG 446) that the God of the Year was "amphidexios", i.e. ambidextrous, ambiguous, and ambivalent, and had weapons in both hands:

"He is himself and his other self at the same time, king and supplanter, victim and murderer, poet and satirist - and his right hand does not know what his left hand does".

Thus the Mesopotamian god Nergal was both the Sower who brings fertility and the Reaper who brings death.

"Elsewhere, in order to simplify the myth, he was represented as twins. This simplification has led, through dualistic theology, to the theory that death, evil, decay and destruction are erroneous concepts which God, the Good, the Right hand, will one day disprove";

but the poet knows that satire, destruction and death are necessary for the clearance of the soil for a new sowing and new life.

"Each twin must conquer in turn, in an age-long and chivalrous war fought for the favours of the White Goddess, as the heroes Gwyn and Greidawl fought for the favours of Creiddylad, or the Heroes Mot and Baal for those of Anat."

In the past two millenia

"theologians, not being poets, have forbidden the Goddess to umpire this war, and made God impose on the Devil impossible terms of unconditional surrender."

I have not found in Agnon the original Spirit of the Year, who is both good and evil. But twins, or rivals for the favours of one woman of divine qualities, are not lacking. In most cases, however, they are not completely equal, but one is slightly, or much, worse than the other. The good, however, is not always the winner or even worthy of winning the fight.

## I

BY (KS III 5) is the mythologically classical story, where the twin-rivals are connected with the seasons of the year, each in turn wins the favours of the woman-goddess. The parallelism between this story and the Great Goddess myths is not so much in separate motifs as we have seen in previous examples, but rather in the theme of the story as a whole. The Goddess appears in BY in her three aspects, as a girl, a woman and a hag (WG 386), in the figures of Tirtsah, Leah, and the old woman in Tirtsah's dream who claims to have been Leah's nurse (BY 46); old nurses in Greek mythology, as Graves says (GM II 320), usually represented the Goddess as a hag. Various descriptions of the three figures enhance their correspondence with the Goddess: Leah's name (Hebrew "lea" or consonantly "l'h") is an anagram of the word for goddess (Hebrew "ela" or "'lh"); she is seen in the story both as a girl and bride, and as the White Goddess of Death and Inspiration. Tirtsah is primarily the flowery Spring Goddess, but in her illness she is identified with her mother as a Death Goddess. (I cannot regard sick or dead women in Agnon's stories as other than Death Goddesses, because that seems to be their usual function, as is seen in HD and AS). Towards the end of the story Tirtsah also becomes a mother, but her divine aspect remains in her dissatisfaction with marriage (BY 52-53) - Graves notes the initial reluctance to marry on the part of ancient goddesses like Hera, for instance, and thereby forfeit their power (GM I 51).

The motif of the rivals for the love of one woman is expressed in BY in various forms: first, Mazal and Mintz compete for the love of Leah, and Mintz is the winner (BY 23); then Landau and Mazal compete for Tirtsah's love, and Mazal is the (admittedly reluctant) winner this time (BY 50);

thirdly, the mere idea of twins is reflected in the figures of the twin-brothers Gottlieb who cannot be distinguished from each other (BY 54). An additional hint is made at the end, when Mazal and Mintz share their love for Tirtsah (ib). I have called this story "change of seasons, change of lovers", because these changes are really tied together in BY: Mazal, the main figure, corresponds to the Spirit of the Waxing Year (I must note here that because of the mixed psychology of Agnon, being of Jewish origin and upbringing on a European background, there is a confusion of the myth: the New Year is sometimes in the autumn, sometimes in the spring; actually, passover time is also considered a New Year in the Jewish religion); he meets Leah in the summer and spends an idyllic time with her, becoming "affianced" to her in the Jewish New Year when she puts a ring on his finger (BY 23). But this is also the autumn and beginning of the dead season in Europe, and she actually marries Mintz then. Wooing Tirtsah, Landau entertains her in midwinter, when the snow is on the ground (BY 38); but in spring time, with the awakening of vegetation and another season of a New Year, she, like her mother, betrothes Mazal to her by announcing her intention to marry him (BY 46). (The active part of women in courtship is well pronounced in Agnon, and corresponds to Graves's remark on

"the religious theory of the early European society where woman was the master of man's destiny: pursued, was not pursued ..." (WG 400).

Besides the main theme of the story there are in BY additional motifs which can be related to the myths of the Great Goddess:

1. Some motifs are connected with the figure of the Goddess herself: Leah always wears white garments (BY 5), which are an ancient sign of death and mourning, as for instance in China.

This is the colour of the White Goddess of Death and Inspiration (WG 68); that Leah has the power of inspiration is shown by the poems Mazal has written for her (BY 11).

Both Tirtsah and Leah are connected with the motif of a scarlet thread: Leah takes a scarlet thread from her hair to tie the Mizrah on the wall (BY 23), and Tirtsah ties a scarlet (or red) thread on her wrist to remind her of Mazal (BY 29); Tirtsah also hears the "death-bearing sound" of the locust (BY 12). These two motifs have, according to Graves, something in common: the locust is said to have been

"perhaps originally an emblem of destruction of the Moon Goddess to whom, as we know from the Biblical stories of Rahab (the harlot) and Tamar (Judah's daughter-in-law), the scarlet thread was sacred; for three locusts and a scarlet thread are mentioned in the Ethiopian 'Kebra Nagast' as the magical properties with which the daughter of Pharaoh seduced King Solomon" (WG 118).

In her troubled love for Mazal Tirtsah compares herself to the legendary Daughter of a Prince, who loved a poor man and was not allowed to marry him (BY 49). The situation does not fit that in the story, but it may be compared with what has been said concerning AR (s. above p. 97).

2. Other motifs in BY are even more casual, though interesting as a part of the whole scheme of this thesis. In their excursion in the forest Tirtsah and Landau "drink birch wine and eat roast apples" (BY 39). I have already mentioned the nature of apples in the Goddess myth: they are given by her to her lover as a symbol for his approaching death, which is due a short while after their love-making, and for his eternal youthful existence after death. The birch, on the other hand, is the "lucky tree of the birth-month" in the tree-calendar (WG 253), and it marks the season of the New Year and the birth of the Spirit of the Year. Mythologically, the adventure of Tirtsah and Landau may be explained as the death-warrant for

Landau and a new hope for Mazal.

In BY Mazal is accompanied by a dog (BY 29), which is an uncommon habit among the Jews of eastern Europe; a dog, however, was the habitual companion of Hercules Melkarth, the Phoenician Sun-hero, as a symbol of the Underworld (WG 53).

3. A strange connection is found in the story between grammar and "chirping like a crane" (BY 11 - ignoring the fact that cranes do not chirp). In his book 'The White Goddess' Graves devotes a whole chapter to the connection between cranes and the alphabet, the principal idea in which is that the crane was sacred to the five-fold Wisdom Goddess (ruler of the five-season year), who invented the alphabet and taught it to man: the crane fly in a formation of the Roman letter V which is the symbol of the number five. (It is strange to see how Agnon, while misleading as a naturalist - the locust is uncommon in Europe, he probably meant cricket, and the crane does not chirp - is still able to fit his material into the mythological context.)

## II

The idea of twin-rivals appears in other stories by Agnon, two of which I shall mention here.

1. Farenheim (KS VII 321): The story tells about the girl Inge and her two friends, Farenheim and Neiss. Neiss was Inge's friend first, and he introduced Farenheim to her. Later he disappears in a mysterious way and is assumed dead, and Farenheim takes his place by Inge's side and marries her. Then Farenheim goes to the war and becomes a prisoner; at that time Neiss returns, as if from the dead, and becomes Inge's lover. Farenheim, who has been thought dead, returns also, and wants to resume his relations with Inge. Here the circle breaks and he is no longer accepted as a rightful rival.

Throughout the story it is made clear that Neiss is "the good one" and Farenheim "the bad one"; Inge makes a final decision in favour of Neiss.

The interesting thing in this story is that there is a "death" and resurrection of each lover in his turn; (Neiss's death has a mythological connection in his being buried under a mountain - Fr 328, 330; s. above p. 89). By the force of civilization Agnon cannot make Inge a bigamist and she must choose between her lovers; in this case she chooses the one who seems to be better than the other. In the story of Giv'at ha-Hol (KS III 381), where the two lovers competing for the love of Ya'el are Hemdat and Shamai, she prefers the vulgar Shamai to the gentle poet Hemdat. (In a story by Jack London a woman in the same position is forced to kill herself because she does not want to choose.)

2. A marked distinction between good and evil appears in Bi-Ne'areinu ubi-Zegeneinu (KS III 273), where the rivalry of the two lovers, Alexander and Deiksil, for Peshi-Sheindle is only a side issue. Here the bad rival is the winner, and the good one is "taken by Lilith to the dark mountains" as seen in the narrator's dream (BB 329). According to Graves this situation is the last stage in the development of religion from the rule of women to their abasement, when all carnal desires belong to the devil while they are at the same time the sole attribute of woman (WG 465-6). Lilith, "the screech owl" (female), is the name of the Babylonian - and later Hebrew - Goddess of Death and Wisdom (her name is also connected with the Hebrew word for night, "layil"); the owl was the emblem of the Death and Wisdom Goddess Athene (WG 315). Agnon makes it clear that Lilith is the girl who is the object of rivalry between Alexander and Deiksil.

The "Land of the Dark Mountains" seems to have been a

Jewish legendary name for the mysterious land of the underworld, from which people sometimes miraculously return. Here again is a situation of a possible resurrection.

In the story of BB there is also a joke about "a virgin who bore twins" (BB 292). The Goddess was, of course, a virgin in one of her aspects, and her twin-lovers were also her sons (WG 388).



## 8. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE GODDESS

## I EDO VE-EINAM

1. The most prominent motif from the Great Goddess myths in EE (KS VII 336) is the connection between the heroine Gemulah and the moon, making her a genuine incarnation of the Moon Goddess. References to this connection are numerous and quite clear: in the first meeting of Gamzu with Gemulah she is standing, singing, on top of an unapproachable cliff while the moon pours her (the femininity of the moon must always be stressed in connection with Agnon's stories) light on her (EE 356); coming to Jerusalem Gemulah falls ill and becomes a sleep-walker, or in Hebrew "lunatic", i.e.

"whenever the moonlight is powerful Gemulah rises from her bed and goes wherever the moon takes her" (EE 355);  
in that case

"(magic) leaves placed in the window make Gemulah return home with the moon's returning to her dwelling" (EE 358).

All these are mere parallelism between Gemulah and the moon; identification of the two is found in the description of Gemulah's behaviour in correlation with that of the moon:

"the girl Ginat has created for himself (later shown to be Gemulah) walks on the roof" (EE 350);

"standing on the top of the cliff Gemulah was singing Ydl ydl ydl wah pah mah" (EE 356);

in the narrator's dream

"the moon walks all over the world singing Ydl ydl ydl wah pah mah" (EE 367);

and on the post-card he receives from the Greifenbachs

"a kind of figure like the moon rests on the roof" (EE 386);  
in this connection again

"the moon came and shone on my eyes ... the voice sang again Ydl ydl ydl wah pah mah; the moon shone on the voice and inside the voice appeared the figure of a woman" (EE 387).

Then Gemulah is found in Ginat's room:

"The moonlight shone in the room and inside the room a young woman stood, wrapped in white, bare footed, her hair dishevelled and her eyes closed: the moon made herself small and came into the room, and then spread all over" (EE 388).

And in the end,

"the woman who had been confined to her bed met her death on the roof" (EE 392).

There is a further connection between Gemulah and the moon: in her country of origin Gemulah is known to have sung "songs of springs and mountains" (EE 363, 390), and in his dream the narrator hears the moon singing Gemulah's song while travelling over "high mountains and springs of water" (EE 366). This connection between songs, mountains and springs appears in Graves's 'The White Goddess' in the chapter about the Triple Muse: at the foot of the Muse's Mount Helicon was a spring from which poets derived their inspiration (WG 383). The Muse, from whom Apollo later usurped the patronage of poetry, had been, according to Graves, the original figure of the Triple White Goddess of the sky (the Moon), the earth and sea (the Mother Goddess and ruler of the seasons), and the underworld (Death and Wisdom) (WG 386); her name was probably derived from the word "mont" - mountain. A significant correlation between Agnon's moon and Graves's Muse appears in the following descriptions: Agnon says that

"the moon is impartial, she shines for the one as much as for the other" (EE 368);

in Graves's words the Muse, appearing as a "Moon-woman" in an ancient Greek icon with her twin sons and lovers,

"is impartial: she destroys or creates with equal passion."

2. A comprehensive description of Gemulah shows other aspects of her which correspond to the Great Moon Goddess:

"Gemulah was as pure as the moon, her eyes like sparks of light, her face like that of Venus" (the Hebrew word is "nogah", which means both "glowing light" and the name of the planet Venus); "she knew how to bake (sacrificial) cakes and roast meat on embers ... she was then twelve years old ... but the light of her wisdom shone like that of an old woman" (EE 376);

and in another place,

"a white kid lay on her knees ... in the evening she said: I would like to eat (sacrificial) cakes" (EE 364);

and again,

"she must be one of the twelve Zodiac signs, the sign of Virgo" (EE 356).

So Gemulah is seen as a triad: she is a young girl of twelve, "as pure as the moon", and a virgin. She is like a mother, holding a kid on her lap; also a parallel of the Love Goddess Venus, a parallel of Great Goddess Ishtar who was the original Virgo of the Zodiac (WG 380), lover and mother of Tammuz (Aphrodite, Venus's counterpart, was also both a virgin and a Love Goddess, for she used to wash in the sea in order to renew her virginity; besides, she was also Adonis's mother). But in her wisdom Gemulah is also an old woman, thus including in herself the three aspects of the Moon Goddess as a virgin, woman and hag (WG 386).

An explanation should be given for the curious Hebrew word Agnon uses for cakes - "kavanim": this is a Biblical word which appears there only twice, both times in Jeremiah. The prophet says that the Jewish exiles in Egypt complain that the destruction of Jerusalem has come about because they were stopped from "making kavanim for the Queen of Heaven" (Jer. VII 18). Dr. Mandelkern explains in the Hebrew Biblical Concordance (KT 539) that "kavanim are cakes in the shape of the goddess Ashtarte, probably a crescent, sacrificed to her as a charm for fertility." Graves identifies the Queen of Heaven with Venus-Ishtar (WG 426);

but she is also the Moon in the triad of queens of the sky, earth and underworld. The fact that Gemulah both makes "kavanim" and eats them makes her both a priestess and an incarnation of the Goddess.

In her illness Gemulah is shown not just in her femininity but as a real aggressive goddess to whom human sacrifice was given, in that she

"beats him (her husband), bites him and tears his clothes" (EE 354),

behaviour which is reminiscent of that of the Lady in AR.

The narrator in EE tells about the talk of some people about "a girl whom Dr. Ginat has created for himself" (EE 347). Agnon mentions here a similar story about Solomon Ibn-Gabirol, who made a wooden girl to serve him; but this in turn may refer to the older legend of Pygmalion who built an image of Aphrodite through his love for her. There is here a further equation of Gemulah with the Love Goddess.

3. Gemulah's first fiancé was Gadi ben-Ge'im. Nothing much is said about him, besides the fact that his mother nursed Gemulah and that in consequence he saw her as a sister and a bride (EE 377). This relationship in itself is suggestive of an old custom of incest which is found in the divine Ugaritic couple of Baal and Anat, who were brother and sister as well as lovers. The Hebrew word for sister is often used in the Bible as a pet-name for a bride. But Gadi's true mythological character is revealed by his name, which on the one hand is the Hebrew name of the God of Luck, appearing in place-names like Baal-Gad; and on the other it is of the same root as the word for the kid - "gedi" - which was lying in Gemulah's lap, parallel to Dionysus the kid, son of the Moon Goddess Rhea (WG 218, 335; also s. above p. 91 ). It will be further noted that both Gemulah and Gadi belonged in the story to the lost tribe of Gad (EE 362).

4. There are other motifs in EE, not particularly related to Gemulah. With reference to the Einamic hymns - of which Tochner says that they symbolize the Torah - there is a strange rejection by Agnon of an original male divinity and priesthood:

"All the scholars who have studied Einam say that its gods and priests are male; how could they not sense the sweetness of a woman's singing flowing from these hymns!" (EE 345).

Agnon describes the Einamic hymns as

"the lost link in the generations' chain, which connects the beginning of history with previous generations" (EE 344).

Some of the myths of the beginning of history are the killing of the Babylonian Sea-Goddess Tiamat by Marduk; the killing of the monster Chimaera by Bellerophon; and the killing of the Snake Goddess Medusa by Perseus. According to Graves all these myths represent the overpowering of the Great Goddess's rule by the worship of male-gods (WG 363).

Agnon presents a strange picture of Gevariah, Gemulah's father:

"his face is like a lion's, his strength is like an ox's, and his feet are as swift as a flying eagle" (EE 362).

According to Graves the main theme of the Great Goddess myths is the change of seasons, and the different seasons, as seen in parts of the Zodiac for instance, are symbolized by different animals. Accordingly, many of the ancient monsters which are composites of different animals are representatives of various calendars (WG 409). Thus the Chimaera, composed of a lion-head, goat-body and serpent-tail represents spring (lion), summer (goat), and winter (serpent). The Cherub, another calendar beast, represents by its different faces spring (lion), summer (eagle), autumn (man), and winter (ox) (WG 413). On this basis we may conclude that Gevariah, a representative of the Spirit of the Year, symbolizes by his

different characters the seasons of spring (lion), summer (eagle), and winter (ox).

In connection with Gevariah we find a remark about the "eagles which renew their youth" (EE 377). Renewal of youth is the particular characteristic of the Phoenix, which had the form of an eagle. According to Graves (WG 412) this, too, is a calendar beast:

"The ancient Egyptians had no leap-year; every year the fragment of a day which was left over at New Year was saved up until after 1460 years they amounted to a whole year ... This was the occasion of much rejoicing ... an eagle was burned alive with spices in a nest of palm branches ... The eagle represented the Sun-god, the palm was sacred to the Great Goddess his mother; the sun had completed his great revolution and the old sun-eagle was therefore returned to the nest for the inauguration of a new Phoenix age ..."

From the ashes a little worm, representing the few hours left over from the Phoenix year, would be born to turn in time into a new Phoenix. It will be noted that Gevariah did not succeed in renewing his youth - the old calendar-age under the rule of the Goddess was substituted by the new Jewish calendar represented by the figure of the Jewish scholar Gamzu.

## II AGADAT HA-SOFER

It is ironical that in the story of AS (KS II 131), which is considered by some critics to be "a purely Jewish picture", some of the clearest motifs from the Great Goddess myths in Agnon can be found.

1. As always in Agnon, the most prominent motifs are found in connection with the heroine; so it is also with Miriam in AS. Her name is interpreted by Graves (WG 161) as "Sea Drop" (Hebrew "mar" + "yam"), being a title of the Sea Goddess, and identified with Myrrha (Adonis's mother) and with Marina

(patroness of poets and lovers), who in turn is identified with the Mermaid or Aphrodite (Eros's mother and Adonis's paramour) who is "the Love Goddess Rising from the Sea". A non-Semitic interpretation of the name Miriam is the Sumeric Ma-ri-enna, which means "the Fruitful Mother of Heaven" (WG 371).

Miriam is described as wearing a headscarf tied under her chin in the form of dove's wings (AS 136). Doves were sacred to the Love Goddess Aphrodite (WG 125), and the Moon Goddess was worshipped with doves in Syria and Palestine (WG 337). When Miriam is adorned as a bride she represents the Flower Goddess about to marry the King of the Year; and her white bridal dress covering Rafael when he dies (AS 144) is the colour of the White Goddess both as May Bride and as the Goddess of Death and Inspiration (WG 448, 68).

2. The charms Miriam uses to help her conceive are no less part of the myth. One is the Odem stone (AS 134); this is a rusty-red semi-precious stone which belonged in the stone calendar to the first month of the year, when the God of the Year is born in the Winter Solstice (WG 269); it includes the date of Christmas, which in Hebrew is called Festival of Birth (presumably a translation from the Russian).

Another birth charm is an amulet Miriam has, with the inscription "Why should not the cow have a heifer when she is young and healthy?"; Miriam ties this charm with the magic number of three times seven (AS 135). Cow goddesses of fertility were Io (WG 62), Pasiphae (WG 329), and Hathor who is identified with Isis, Horus's mother (WG 102); seven was the number of letters in the sacred name of the Libyao-Pelasgian Goddess of Wisdom before it became sacred to the Jewish God (WG 382), and the Pythagorean number of the month of the Willow as a symbol of female enchantment (WG 387), as well as the number of the Jewish Pillars of Wisdom (WG 260);

three was the prime number of the Three-fold Great Goddess (WG 24).

A charm for easy birth, for which Miriam unfortunately has no use, is the willow water, in which the branches left over from the Festival of Willows are dipped (AS 135). The willow tree was the prime tree of the witches' Goddess, called Hecate, Circe, Hera, or Persephone - all Moon Goddesses of Death (WG 173). It was connected, in Jewish religion as well as in Nature religion, with water, and used as a charm for rain-making in the Jewish festival attached to the New Year; water has always been connected with birth. In the tree calendar the willow belonged to the spring months April-May, the time of bird-nesting in Europe (WG 209). The name of the tree is connected with motherhood in one of the Spirit of the Year's titles, Salma, which is interpreted as Sal = Ma = Willow Mother (WG 373).

The figure of the infant R. Gadi'el, who appears in the story as a herald of child-birth (AS 134), is reminiscent of the infant Dionysus (WG 158) in the form of a kid, who was yearly born to his mother the Moon Goddess; the name Gadi'el is connected with the Hebrew word for kid - "gedi".

3. The connection of Miriam's husband with the Great Goddess myths is by his name, Rafael, meaning "El (or God) heals"; it was the name of the angel of healing, the chief patron of the therapeutic Essenes (WG 156), and seems to have been a development of the figure of Asclepius, the healer god. About Asclepius it is said that he was the son of Athene in her aspect of the Crow Goddess of Death and Divination (WG 52). Asclepius is identified with Cronos, the Raven God of the Year (GM I 176); and by her appearance as a Death Goddess (i.e. by taking part in her husband's death) Miriam identifies with Athene,

"the dead hero (Cronos or Asclepius) having been both her son and her lover" (GM I 176).



The irony of the story is particularly seen in its mythological aspect, because Rafael denied Miriam the privilege of being either a lover or a mother.

### III SHEVU'AT EMUNIM

It is quite possible that had I not started my studies of Agnon with SE (KS VII 216) I would never have thought of looking in his stories for motifs from the Great Goddess myths. For an illustration let me quote some statistics here: in HD there are about 24 motifs, in BY there are 10, and in EE 18; but in SE there are some 70 motifs; so that while studying that story there was no way of avoiding them or their significance. On the other hand, while HD and BY relate a coherent theme from these myths, it is difficult to join the mass of various motifs, figures and events in SE together to make up a distinct theme. The main theme of the story is the relationship between the hero Jacob and the various women he meets in the course of his life.

1. It is difficult to judge from Agnon's description what Jacob Rechnitz's character really was. In spite of interpreters' evaluation of him as "passive", Agnon plainly denies it in the following sentence:

"Rechnitz was not a passive man" (SE 257); but he had the habit of not worrying about things which did not depend on his own action. For me it is clear from various descriptions in the story that Jacob Rechnitz was a poet by nature, in spite of being also a scientist. His attitude towards his subject of study, the seaweeds, was poetic in itself, as may be seen from the following passage:

"The mysteries of the water, wonder of creation, gave him strength and courage. These plants grow in the sea like flower-gardens, like thick bushes, like a shady grove in the water; their colours are like yellow

sulphur, or purple, or like raw flesh, white pearls, olives, corals, or peacock feathers; and they are stuck to the sharp rocks and cliffs. In his love for the sea and its plants he calls it 'my orchard, my vineyard', and other names of affection" (SE 219).

Many of the similies in Agnon's description correspond to motifs from the Great Goddess myths. The sea itself, and water in general, are the prime symbols of femininity, the origin of life and factor of fertility. Groves were particularly sacred to the Goddess as Mother Earth, one figure of whom was Belili. She was "the Sumerian Moon Goddess, Love Goddess and Underworld Goddess" who was also a tree goddess, and "originally every tree was hers", as well as a goddess of springs and wells (WG 58-59). The flower-garden is a symbol of love, as it appears in Canticles, and a symbol of the beloved bride, who is also symbolized in the same context by a spring (Can IV 12); on the same occasion the bride is also compared to an orchard ("pardes" in Hebrew), the word which Jacob uses to describe his seaweed garden. Graves speaks of the poems of Canticles as celebration of

"the mysteries of an annual sacred marriage between Salma the King of the Year and the Flower Queen" (WG 261).

Vineyard (Hebrew "kerem") is another term which is much used in Canticles; the vine was one of the sacred trees in the tree-calendar and it expressed "joy, exhilaration and wrath"; it was sacred to Thracian Dionysus and to Osiris (WG 183). To the five-fold White Goddess (s. below p.131) it was sacred because of its five-pointed leaves (WG 201).

In Agnon's description the seaweeds appear in various colours: sulphur-yellow, purple, raw flesh, pearl-white, olive, corals, peacock. This series of colours recalls the description of the garments of the goddess Isis in Apuleius's book 'The Golden Ass' (WG 72):

"Her vestment was ... yielding diverse colours, somewhere white and shining, somewhere yellow like the crocus flower, somewhere rosy red, somewhere flaming".

Yellow was the dress-colour of the two girls attendant on Artemis Calliste, in honour of the moon (WG 179); purple was the colour worn by the Celtic God of the Year Bran (WG 58); red, raw flesh, is the mark of the red Goddess of Love and Battle who killed her lovers at midsummer (WG 70); and white is the prime colour of the White Goddess. The two colours in Agnon which do not figure in Apuleius's description of Isis are those of the olive and the peacock. The olive was Athene's tree (GM I 62), which she brought from Libya to Greece together with her worship as a Triple Goddess (GM I 99). The peacock was the favourite bird of Juno (AF 35) - the Roman parallel of the Great Goddess Hera (WG 85) - in the tail of which she fixed the hundred eyes of Argus (GM I 190).

2. Jacob's poetic nature is also seen in his attitude towards women; far from running away from love, he loves all the women he meets: young, mature or old. This love is expressed by Agnon in the following extracts from the story:

"Jacob Rechnitz had affection for the girls" (SE 227);

"since Shoshanah came to Jaffa he discovered the beauty of the girls he had known in Jaffa" (SE 256);

"sometimes he favours a small group of lovely girls to anybody in the world" (SE 288);

"Jacob looked (at Shoshanah's hands) as he used to look at her mother's fingers .... his mouth quivered and he longed to put his lips to them" (SE 268);

"Jacob bent and lifted (the little girl) up and said: 'My sweet, I feel like kidnapping you'" (SE 270).

This general attitude is expressed by Rachel, who is the cleverest of the six Jaffa girls:

"I know that I and Leah are not enough for you" (SE 291).

But his feeling is not just affectionate; some interpreters

find Jacob as cold-blooded as a fish, but this is not what it seems from the following passages: when he is with Asenat, with her flaming lips,

"you feel like taking her in your arms" (SE 257);  
with Tamar,

"once Rechnitz turned his lips toward hers and put his mouth on her mouth" (SE 259)

and

"suddenly he felt like taking in his arms that body which did not know what to do with itself, and to kiss her on her lips" (SE 289);

and when the girls decide on a race to establish which of them would marry Jacob,

"Jacob said: 'I agree'; and when he said that his face turned pale and his heart started storming ....(and) his hands shook" (SE 295, 296).

But more than any other feeling, the one connected most with the attitude of a poet towards women, in which he acknowledges them as divine, is the ambivalence: admiration for their beauty, together with a fear of their destructive inclination (WG 248, 448). This ambivalence is seen in the following:

"Jacob looked (at Shoshanah) with resentment .... then he felt that without her the whole world is taken from him" (SE 270);

"Jacob did not know whether to be glad that Shoshanah had not gone or not" (SE 266).

In a more vague way it is said that Jacob was thinking about the girls, but

"if he knew what he thought he would have been frightened" (SE 288).

Jacob's feeling of fear toward Shoshanah is expressed in the sentence

"a shiver took hold of him and his hair stood on end" (SE 249)

in her presence. The idea of the hair standing on end when

the "fearful presence of the Goddess" is felt (WG 21) has already been mentioned in connection with AR. To Jacob it happens when Shoshanah tells him that she never forgets anything. It will be noted that this faculty of hers caused interpreters to equate Shoshanah with the Jewish God.

3. Jacob's name is also connected with the Goddess myths. According to Graves, the Hebrew name "Ya'akov" means "Ya-Aqev", i.e. "God of the Heel" (WG 325); this was a god of the year of the type of Dionysus the Bull who walked on tiptoes (as the bull seems to do), having a sacred heel which must not touch the ground. (Biblical Jacob is also connected with the heel, though with a different slant - Gen. XXV 26). In order to prevent the sacred king's heel from touching the ground his thigh was dislocated, thus twisting the whole leg. Biblical Jacob's thigh was dislocated by the angel (Gen XXXII 26), followed by renaming him as Israel. In Graves's opinion the name Israel means in Hebrew "Ish-Rahel", i.e. "Rachel's Man" (WG 161), given to Jacob when he married Rachel who was a priestess of the Dove Goddess of Love. In SE one of Jacob's girl-friends is also called Rachel.

Other remarks by Agnon about Rechnitz may show him as a figure of the Spirit of the Year. He is

"as fresh (green) as a young god" (SE 279)

and

"his looks reminded (the Consul) of the time of spring when all the world is renewing itself" (ib.).

The God of the Year had to be young, because he was killed before he had time to grow old and impotent; and his youth particularly corresponded to the time of spring, when the young sun was renewing itself after the death of winter (WG 192). When, then, Agnon compares Jacob and the six girls to the seven planets (SE 228), it may be assumed

that Jacob represents the sun in the old series of planets of the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn (WG 259). The final touch in this direction is made in the lights of a ship out at sea (SE 293); the ship reminds the girls of Jacob's close departure, but in such a ship the body of the dead God of the Year (Arthur, Bran or Cronos) was sent to his island of burial, there to lead an eternal existence of youth (WG 109, 418). (Stern also connects the ship with Jacob's death).

4. The most significant insight of Agnon - and through him of Jacob - into the realm of the Great Goddess myths is, in my opinion, Jacob's dream which made him change his course of study and take up a subject connected both with the sea and with Nature:

"One night (Rechnitz) was reading Homer when he heard a sound like the sea-waves; but he could not see the sea. He shut his book and listened: the sound was breaking like the noise of much water. He rose from his chair and looked outside; the moon stood in the sky between clouds and stars and everywhere all was quiet and calm. He returned to his book and read a little but the sound remained in his ears. Then he put his book down and climbed into his bed; the noise quietened down, but the sea whose sound Rechnitz had heard stretched before him to infinity, and the moon (levanah) hovered on the water, cool and sweet and fearful" (SE 220).

It is interesting to compare this vision of moon and sea to Apuleius's description in 'The Golden Ass' of Lucius's feelings just before his vision of the goddess Isis (s. above p. 115):

"About the first watch of the night when as I had slept my first sleep, I awaked with sudden fear and saw the moon shining bright as when she is at the full and seeming as though she leaped out of the sea. Then I thought with myself that this was the most secret time, when that goddess had most puissance and force ..." (WG 70).

Besides Jacob's dream Agnon mentions another reason for his choosing his particular profession; that reason is connected with the figure of Shoshanah, and most interpreters see a contradiction between the two reasons, and an escapism from real life into his dream. I think it will not be difficult to show that the two reasons are one and the same. Agnon says that it is possible that Jacob was interested in water plants since the days he was a little boy and used to play with the Consul's daughter Shoshanah in the Consul's garden where there was a water pool with water plants.

"He then remembered that round pool in the garden, surrounded by bushes, and flowers which Shoshanah used to cut and use for making garlands; suddenly Shoshanah jumped into the pool and vanished; then she came out with her hair dripping water and covered with seaweeds exactly like a mermaid" (SE 277).

Covered with garlands of flowers Shoshanah represents the Flower Queen, or May Bride, who annually married the King of the Year (WG 261); but she is also covered with seaweeds "like a mermaid", and the mermaid was "the Love Goddess rising from the Sea" (WG 395), i.e. Aphrodite. As a goddess of plants and fresh water she corresponds to the Moon Goddess Belili (WG 59); as a mermaid she corresponds to the Sea Goddess Aphrodite; thus it is her own manifestation as Moon and Sea which appears in Jacob's dream. It is significant that Shoshanah takes Jacob to the sea shore to remind him of their oath (SE 248); this shows that the sea and its plants did not stand between Shoshanah, Jacob and their oath, but that it was a powerful witness to their reunion. At the end of the story it also witnesses Shoshanah's winning the race and Jacob's hand (SE 298).

5. The main indication of Shoshanah being a flower goddess, besides her continued connection with flowers, is in her name, which is the Hebrew for "rose" or "lily". As it appears in

Canticles it is translated as "lily-of-the-valley" (lily is the shoshan, or shoshanah, from the word "shesh" meaning "six", so called because of its six petals; is it a further hint for the group of six girls as a parallel to Shoshanah?); it is one of the titles the Shulamite gives herself (Can. II 1). But in modern usage Shoshanah is the rose, and this is the flower with which she is mostly connected in the story. To stress her aspect of a queen and a bride Shoshanah at the end of the story puts a crown on her head (SE 298); but this time it is a garland of seaweeds, thus showing again her connection with the sea.

Shoshanah's name connects her also with the legend of Sleeping Beauty, through its German name which means "Rose amongst the Thorns". Her sleeping sickness resembles death, and her connection with death is also found in remarks like

"Once I dreamed I were dead .... how nice is the fate of the mummies, buried in the earth with no toil or troubles; how I wish I were like them" (SE 271).

This connection is enhanced in her identification with her dead mother, e.g. in Jacob's vision during the race, when the figures of Shoshanah, her dead mother and his own mother get mixed up in his imagination (SE 297); or in the description of both Shoshanah and her mother as

"vanishing in blue distances" (SE 222, 271)

- which would be a fine presentation of the Queen of Heaven. On the whole her death does not seem to be real, for the mummies and stuffed animals whom she wants to resemble do not look dead (she never wishes herself to be a corpse), and her own condition is but a sleep which resembles death. Thus she is described as a "drowsing princess", and this is also the adjective applied by Agnon to the stuffed swallow at Jacob's school (SE 253). The swallow is described by E.A. Armstrong (FB 179-181) as both a fire and a water bird in



mythology:

"In eastern Europe and Asia fire is fetched by the swallow"...

it brought the first fire after the deluge, i.e. it heralds the first sun-rays of spring.

"The swallow is connected with water and fertility ...

Isis was said to have taken the form of a swallow" (FB 179-181).

The clue to the problem, in my opinion, is in the word "drowsing" which shows that Shoshanah's death is only apparent and temporary. Drowsing Princess is used in Hebrew as a synonym for Sleeping Beauty, and here is what Graves says about the stories of Sleeping Beauty and Snow White, where the princess is also revived from her apparent death:

"The taboo on the death of a priestess (a priestess is an incarnation of the Goddess - T.B.) may have been lifted, in theory, on certain rare occasions; for example, at the close of a caecum (cycle) of 100 or 110 years the Carmenta (the Roman Great Goddess) priestess ended her life .... and the calendar was revised.... The German folk-stories of Sleeping Beauty and Snow White seem to refer to this type of death .... These deaths are therefore mock-deaths only - for the Goddess is plainly immortal; ... the annual drama is resumed, when the amorous prince .... is free to do as he pleases in the .... month of the hedge-rose (June), when his bride consents to open her half-closed eyes and smile" (WG 421).

In this context it may be added that the occasion of the girls' race in SE is a parallel to the races in which the fifty priestesses of the Goddess Hera took part in order to choose a high priestess who would then marry the annual Oak King (WG 357, GM I 19) - a title of the God of the Year to whom the oak was sacred (WG 128). Mythologically then Shoshanah rises from her mock-death and takes part in the race, in which she wins both the high-priestesshood and the right to choose her lover as a king of the year.

It may be seen now that Shoshanah represents here the

Love Goddess as a bride, the first in the triad of the Moon Goddess. The Goddess as a Mother appears very shortly in the figure of Jacob's mother, while the real Death Goddess in SE is Gertrude, Shoshanah's mother who dies at the beginning of the story and in whose grave Jacob is nearly buried (SE 225). The three of them are confused in Jacob's mind when he is waiting for the result of the race (SE 297).

6. The figure of Ehrlich in the story as a myth is interesting. Though very little of the myth appears in the man himself, in connection with Jacob he may represent the times when a prince could not inherit his father's kingdom -- this being transferred through the women of the family -- but had to travel and find shelter in other countries, there to compete with other princes for the hand of the heiress if he wanted to become a king (GM II 287). Jacob is no prince; on the contrary: the situation entirely agrees with that of numerous fairy tales in which a poor man wins the hand of the princess in competition with princes and kings by his skill and wisdom -- a king also wanted to marry Shoshanah (SE 265). The lordly position of Shoshanah's father is shown in the description of his dwelling as "a palace" (SE 221), and he is actually the one who helps Jacob in his hard climb to attain his goal (SE 226). This presumably is reached when Jacob is offered a professor's cathedra in America.

Thus it seems that in spite of the muddle of figures and motifs there is a clear central mythological theme in the story, which is that of the young God of the Year about to reach the climax of his life and marry the Love Goddess in her aspect of a May Bride. It correlates with that season of the year, between spring and summer, when there was a period of purification and abstinence connected with the cleaning of temples, just before the great celebrations of

the marriage of the Goddess's priestess with the young Sun-king (WG 175). (This period still exists in Judaism, in the ban on marriage between passover and Pentecost. The breaking of the taboo on the 33rd day of the counting of the Omer may be a symbolic opposition to the old paganistic custom). So Graves's full text in connection with the priestess's mock-death is:

"Then the annual drama is resumed, with the amorous prince chafing, as usual, at the ascetic restrictions of the Hawthorn (the particular May tree of the White Goddess, who hates marriage), but free to do as he pleases in the Oak-month" (WG 421).

7. This, however, is not the end of the motifs from the Great Goddess Myths in SE. The six Jaffa girls, for instance, give a very comprehensive picture of Woman from her various aspects, which are also the different aspects of the Goddess. Thus the various characteristics found in the six girls are: virginity and artistic talent (Tamar), sex appeal (Mirah), motherhood (Leah), proud beauty and shrewdness (Rachel), silliness and plainness (Rayah), deadly cruel beauty (Asenat). Taken all together, they form a triad, for the six of them are presented by the author in three pairs, and these pairs, far from being accidental, form opposites of features: Leah and Rachel (besides being the names of Biblical Jacob's two wives) represent goodness and plainness against cleverness, beauty and wickedness (SE 234-5, 256). This situation corresponds to what Graves says of the Goddess:

"It is an axiom that the White Goddess is both lovely and cruel, ugly and kind" (WG 248),

and this is the source of the ambivalence in the attitude of the poet towards her, and in poetic meaning. Leah and Rachel are good friends (SE 256); Asenat and Rayah are cousins (SE 258). The former is both beautiful and clever, the latter is both plain and silly (SE 257-8). Asenat's description -

"her lips are burning .... but her eyes are as blue  
and sharp as steel"

fits Graves's description of the White Goddess:

"Lips red as rowan-berries, startlingly blue eyes" (WG 24).  
The third pair is defined as such by the contradiction in  
the girls' character: Mirah is full-bodied and sexy but  
behaves like a boy; Tamar is as flat-chested as a boy but  
the sweetest girl of them all. Mirah is interested in  
sports, riding and running, while Tamar has artistic inclina-  
tions; Mirah has been brought up by her father, while Tamar  
lives with her mother (SE 259). In the story it is clear that  
Tamar is the main rival of Shoshanah and recognized as such  
by her (SE 271). She too is a goddess figure, that of the  
date-palm which is the Hebrew meaning of her name Tamar.  
According to Graves this was the Tree of Life in the Babylonian  
Garden of Eden, and the Goddess called by the name of Tamar -  
an equivalent of Ishtar - was particularly connected with birth:  
the palm is known for its thriving on the salty soil close  
to the sea which is the Universal Mother. Arabian tribes  
adored the date-palm as a goddess and draped it annually  
with women's clothes (WG 190, 412). The flowers on Tamar's  
breast make her a flower goddess, but the

"blue aura emanating from her face and confusing the  
(blue and grey) colours of her hair and eyes" (SE 259)  
connects her with the Goddess of Death (WG 323, 426), while  
at the same time it is also the colour of the sea and the  
sky at night (WG 241); nevertheless she is the youngest and  
most innocent of the girls. She is then herself a triad of  
a virgin, Mother and Death Goddess. Tamar's ambition to  
study "either medicine or sculpture" connects her further  
with the Triple Muse in the figure of the Celtic goddess  
Brigit, who was a goddess of Poetry, Healing, and Smithcraft  
(WG 394). So she is a serious rival for Shoshanah; but

Shoshanah reflects the particular aspect of the Goddess as a flowery Spring Goddess and she is the actual bride for Rechnitz as "a young god".

There are in the story other motifs which show the girls' connection with the Great Goddess myths. Agnon compared them to the stars (the planets are called in Hebrew "moving stars") in the words:

"If the stars could not be seen, the girls' eyes would spread light on the road" (SE 218)

or

"because there were seven of them (meaning Rechnitz and the six girls), and because they used to walk together at night, they were known in the town as the seven planets" (or "moving stars");

and in another place there is the description of them walking on the beach,

"the shores were long and the moon shone on the sand and on the sea; a good atmosphere (or breeze) hovered upon Rechnitz and the six girls, for on their way they called Mirah to come and complete the number of the planets" (SE 292).

In all these descriptions there is an equation of the girls with the heavenly bodies; towards the end of the story the idea develops into an actual moon-worship:

"In the sky above and on the sea below the moon (levanah) ran as if lunatic ("moon-struck"); and the sand also looked like a lunatic, and seemed to be walking on and on. Like the sand and the whole air the girls also stopped, with Rechnitz, and they all seemed to be struck by a dream. Looking upward they could see the moon running; looking down they could see her hovering on the water .... Rachel took Leah's hand, and Leah took Asenat's hand, and Asenat Rayah's, and Rayah Mirah's, and Mirah Tamar's, and Tamar took Rachel's hand, and they all encircled Rechnitz and danced around him. Then Rachel left the line and kneeled opposite the sea with her eyes lifted towards the moon" (SE 293).

Then the race begins, the purpose of which, as we have seen, is to establish who will marry Jacob.

8. Wisdom is an important motif in SE, and it is mostly connected with Jacob's profession as a researcher in seaweeds. Wisdom is also one of the attributes of the Great Goddess, appearing in the figure of Athene and expressed in Christianity by the figure of Sophia (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church explains that Sophia - Greek Wisdom was female much the same as Hebrew "Hokhmah" - was thought by the Gnostics to be connected with the creation and redemption of the world, being both the spouse of the Logos and the mother of the Demiurge; in Christianity she became a male figure, Christ as an incarnation of the wisdom of God - DCC 1471). Agnon describes Wisdom ("Hokhmah") as a "pleasant wife", who does not demand too much (SE 283); this may reflect on the virginity of Athene and on her intention to remain so, or on the fact that she had formerly been the figure of the Goddess as a hag who had passed the age of love (WG 255). But Wisdom is also connected with the number seven in the seven pillars she has built for herself (Pr. IX 1), and according to Graves these pillars were the seven days of the week corresponding on the one hand to the seven planets (WG 259) and on the other to the seven letters in the "Holy and Ineffable Name of the Libyao-Pelasgian Goddess of Wisdom" (WG 382), Neith, with whom the Death Goddess Athene is identified (GM I 44). In SE Wisdom in the form of seaweeds is also connected with the sea, and with its healing qualities in the form of iodine (SE 290), and that brings us back to the Great Goddess of the Sea and to the Muse as Brigit (s. previous section).

9. It is always interesting to see how Agnon incorporated Nature and its phenomena into his stories. In SE, far from Judaizing these phenomena as some interpreters have found in other stories, the descriptions are quite "natural" or even paganistic, and fit well into the scheme of the Goddess myths.

Here are some examples:

"Sometimes he would walk with all the girls together, at night on the shore of the sea whose waves kiss the beaches and the skies kiss the earth" (SE 228);

"He saw himself again walking with little Shoshanah while she was picking flowers in the garden and tying them into garlands, or skating on the ice in the garden pool. Summer and winter, spring and autumn, all seasons of the year, were mixed together, everything which was good and beautiful in them stood before him in one unit" (SE 229);

"Jacob sits with Shoshanah amongst trees and bushes and flowers; but this is winter, at the time that the very garden where Jacob and Shoshanah spent their childhood is covered with cold snow and the pool is wrapped in ice" (SE 268);

"The garden flowers blossomed and the lemon trees spread their aroma, and the palm leaves inside the garden stretched themselves toward a blue sky, and the blue sky sprouted opposite every tree and shrub" (SE 280).

Agnon's fascination with the changes of the seasons is quite obvious from these descriptions.

Some of the natural apparitions in Agnon, however, go beyond the mere description and may again be found in connection with the myth. The Consul, for instance, sees in Jacob an incarnation of the season of spring:

"The sight of the fellow (Jacob) reminded him of spring time, when all the world renews itself. He also wanted to be renewed, if not in the mountains and hills, at least in the garden by the hotel" (SE 279);

and in this context the Consul calls Jacob "a young god".

The palm, the birth-tree of Isis and Latona (GM I 86), is mentioned quite a few times: one of the girls is called Tamar after it, and both Rachel and Shoshanah are compared to it in their beautiful stature (SE 234, 281). The African king who wanted to marry Shoshanah had a palace made of palm leaves (SE 265); and it is said to be growing in the garden of the hotel. But its importance is really shown in one of

the main attractions of Jaffa, which is a group of nine palms,

"whose green top supported the silver clouds, and it was crowned by a sort of silvery-green crown, glowing and rising in silvery-green and greenish-silver in the clear air, and the leaves' fibres quivered like drizzle in the sun" (SE 247).

Here is what Graves has to say about the palm:

"The palm, the birth tree of Egypt, Babylonia, Arabia and Phoenicia, gives its name phoenix ("bloody") to Phoenicia, which formerly covered the whole Eastern Mediterranean, and to the Phoenix which is born reborn in a palm. Its poetic connection with birth is that the sea is the Universal Mother and that the palm thrives close to the sea in sandy soil heavily charged with salt; without salt at its roots a young palm remains stunted. The palm is the Tree of Life in the Babylonian Garden of Eden story. Its Hebrew name is "Tamar" - Tamar was the Hebrew equivalent of the Great Goddess Ishtar or Ashtaroth; and the Arabians adored the palm of Nejran as a goddess, annually draping it with women's clothes and ornaments. Both Delian Apollo and Nabatean Dusared were born under a palm-tree" (WG 190).

Another motif may be seen in the passage

"from the sea rose the sound of its waves which was like the sound of monstrous animals" (SE 264).

Monstrous sea-animals are mentioned of course in the Bible - the Leviathan and its associates; but according to Graves they are much more ancient beings:

"The sea-beast is the Goddess Tiamat or Rahab, whom the god Bel or Marduk wounded mortally and usurped her authority and chained her in her female form to the rock to keep her from mischief",

as appears in the tale of Perseus and Andromeda.

"It has been suggested that in the original icon (attached to this tale) the Goddess's chains were really necklaces, bracelets and anklets, while the sea-beast was her emanation" (WG 363).

10. Not many numbers appear in SE, but most of those that do have some bearing on the Great Goddess myths. One of them,



however, the number seven, which is all important in Judaism and on which Sadan has based his interpretation of SE, seems always to conceal the more mythical number of three, or its multiplications: Agnon says he wanted at first to call the story 'The Seven Girls' (SE 298), but he can get this number of girls only by adding Shoshanah to the group of the Jaffa girls; on the other hand, the number of the seven planets is attained only by adding Jacob to the same group. Both additions are to my mind unsatisfactory, for the six girls form, as I have shown, an integral unit to whom any addition would be a deficiency. The same may be said about the group of palm-trees: it is said that the significance of the number seven is shown in them because they have been planted by Japhet in memory of himself, his wife and their seven sons (SE 247); but as a whole group of nine they are much more impressive. It may be seen that in both cases the artificially attained number seven conceals the more natural number of three, which is the prime number of the Triple Goddess:

"As Goddess of the Underworld she was concerned with Birth, Procreation and Death. As Goddess of the Earth she was concerned with the three seasons of Spring, Summer and Winter: she animated trees and plants and ruled all living creatures. As Goddess of the Sky she was the Moon, in her three phases of New Moon, Full Moon, and Waning Moon. This explains why from a triad she (the Muse) was so often enlarged to an ennead. But it must never be forgotten that the Triple Goddess, as worshipped for example at Stymphalus, was a personification of primitive woman - woman the creatress and destructress. As the New Moon or Spring she was girl; as the Full Moon or Summer she was woman; as the Old Moon or Winter she was hag" (WG 386).

So the number of palm-trees in the story is the number of the nine-fold Muse, and "a symbol of Lunar Wisdom" (WG 182). On Shoshanah's wardrobe Jacob sees a bunch of twelve roses, and he is glad they are not thirteen (SE 255). He may well be glad, for the number thirteen is that of the month in which

he, as a Spirit of the Year, should be killed, in accordance with the old calendar of thirteen months (WG 185). According to Graves, the number twelve is always that of the companions of the God of the Year (thirteen being his own number). For example: Arthur and his Twelve Knights of the Round Table; Odysseus and his Twelve Companions; Romulus and his Twelve Shepherds; Jacob and his Twelve Sons, etc. (WG 201). In this connection in SE there is some confusion around the hour of nine o'clock (s. the following passage); in another place it is mentioned that Jacob has stayed in Jaffa for three years (SE 284), and Shoshanah was asked to be the third wife of the African king (SE 265) - all these are occurrences of the number three or its multiplications.

Besides three, five is the most sacred number of the Goddess (WG 195, 295) as a ruler of the year of five seasons of the Birth, Initiation, Love, Repose and Death of the Spirit of the Year (WG 214). The appearance of this number or its multiplications is even more casual than that of number three. The confusion of times when Jacob is sitting in Shoshanah's room is more or less between the hours nine and ten o'clock:

"Suddenly he remembered what he wanted to recall before he had gone to the second lesson. It was either on the previous night or the night before that he was invited to Shoshanah's room for supper .... When Shoshanah went out for the tea Jacob looked at her wardrobe and saw a bunch of roses. He counted them and found there were twelve, and though he was not superstitious he was glad there were not thirteen of them ... He and Shoshanah talked of many people .... and Shoshanah amazingly talked about the Consul as if he were Jacob's father .... he decided to leave at nine, but when it was time he did not leave. Talking about Shoshanah's mother, she surprisingly did not know where her mother had been born .... When he looked at the clock it was ten ... but Shoshanah said 'It is not yet nine o'clock ... He went to the bus, bought a ticket and climbed up .... suddenly he was again at Shoshanah's, and it was not yet eleven, but he surely had left at ten...' (SE 255).

I do not know of any significance of the number eleven, but the mixing of times has a definite poetic value which is connected with the presence of the Muse (WG 343).

The number five appears as if by accident towards the end of the story, when the girls gather at Rechnitz's place: first Tamar comes, and nearly causes him to relieve his tension by kissing her; Rachel and Leah come in before he has time to do it, and then Asenat comes in with Rayah.

"And so the five girls sit again at Rechnitz's" (SE 291) -- this is said quite naturally as if five has been their number all the time. There is no explanation why Mirah is not there, unless the purpose is to give Rechnitz the opportunity to show (the reader) his feelings towards Tamar. The girls soon resume their usual number of six when going to the seaside.

11. Lastly, there are some names from Greek mythology, legend and history (with no distinction between the three forms of literature), coupled with remarks like "the good gods" etc.; these were regarded by some of Agnon's interpreters as the real paganistic motifs of the story, and led them to treat it as a non-Jewish work. But Agnon's way in dealing with these motifs is not serious, and though he is accurate enough in calling Asclepius patron of healing, he describes Zeus as a mere god of hospitality and mentions Medea and Sappho in one breath as representatives of Greek and Roman cultures (SE 227). To my mind, the poetic value and symbolism of these names in the context of Agnon's story is negligible, particularly in view of the genuine poetic motifs I have enumerated, in as much as no such force is given them by the author.

Re-reading the last passages it seems to me that (knowingly or unknowingly) this story has got out of Agnon's

hand, driven by a hidden force of intuition; what was supposed to have been a Jewish allegory has become a hymn based on "the Single Theme of Poetry" and dedicated to the Goddess.

## CONCLUSION

While writing this thesis my attention was directed to the work of C.G. Jung, with which I had previously not been familiar, and which proved to be in its great part an elaborate study of the interrelation between psychology and mythology. Reading Jung's books I have found in them what might have been the basis for a very interesting aspect of interpreting Agnon. In his 'Analytical Psychology' (AP 44) he writes about the Collective Conscious, which appears throughout the history of human culture in various mythological motifs:

"The archaic relics of the mind (are) parallel to the archaic relics of the body"

(the appendix being an example of the latter). He says (AP 106) that

"children are more aware of the mythological contents of the collective conscious, and if they remain conscious of them for too long the individual is threatened by an incapacity for adaptation; he is haunted by a yearning to remain with or return to the original vision";

such is the experience of poets or mystics. (Hochman's comment on Agnon's disability to face realism in his stories may be a different expression of the same idea - s. Chapter 4). Jung further describes the poet as a person who

"has the capacity to personify his mental content" (AP 81).

In view of all this we can see Agnon as a poet yearning for his childhood manifestations of the collective conscious, both as a human being (remembering the prehistorical life within Nature) and as a Jew (remembering the personal and national relations with God): this theme could be elaborated to cover all his works.

In another place ("Psychology and Literature" in 'Man in Search of a Soul') Jung presents his views on literature and

its commentary:

"The novels which are most fruitful for the psychologist are those in which the author has not already given a psychological interpretation of his characters, and which therefore leave room for analysis and explanation, or even invite it by their mode of presentation. Good examples of this kind of writing are the novels of Benoit and .... Rider Haggard" (MMS 178).

The particular novels Jung speaks of are 'L'Atlantide' and 'She' by the two authors respectively, but in my opinion all Agnon's stories used in this thesis, besides many others, may well serve as examples, as can be seen in the following passage:

"In dealing with the psychological mode of artistic creation, we never need ask ourselves what the material consists of or what it means. But this question forces itself upon us as soon as we come to the visionary mode of creation. We are astonished, taken aback, confused, put on our guard or even disgusted - and we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded in nothing of everyday, human life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears and the dark recesses of the mind that we sometimes sense with misgiving" (MMS 182).

It is unfortunate that none of Agnon's interpreters was either familiar or interested enough in Jung to use his ideas as a basis for interpreting Agnon; instead, the psychological aspect in most interpretations is in the main amateurish and superficial, and on the whole unsatisfactory. As for myself, my interest in mythology as such is far greater than in Jung's psychological interpretation of it, and so I have applied the former to Agnon, rather than the latter. However I hope that somebody sometime will take up the idea and do this work, which should prove to be very illuminating.

All this may again indicate the depth of Agnon's work, its lending itself to any kind of interpretation and its ability to stand any analysis, be it shallow or profound,

benefiting from it rather than losing anything. Any and every interpretation of Agnon is worth while, including contradictory ones, for it is in human nature to be contradictory; likewise no interpreter has the right to deny that of any other, for there is a place for all of them, provided they do not contradict the facts of the original text.

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- Ag Agunot ("The Anchored (Deserted) Ones"); KS II, p. 405.
- AH S.Y. Agnon ve-Hayim Hazaz ("S.Y. Agnon and H. Hazaz"); Ya'aqov Bahat; Yovel Library Ltd., Israel, 1962.
- AJ American Journal of Semitic Languages.
- A0 Ad olam ("Forever More"); KS VIII, p. 315.
- AP Analytical Psychology; C.G. Jung; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1968 (1935).
- AR Ha-adonit veba-rokhelet ("The Lady and the Pedlar"); KS VI, p. 92.
- AS Agadat ha-sofer ("The Legend of the Scribe"); KS II, p. 131.
- BB Bi-ne'areinu ubi-zegeneinu ("With our Youngsters and with our Elders"); KS III, p. 273.
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- BQ Bein bayit le-qever ("Between Home and Grave"); D. Sadan; LS, p. 135.



- BY Bi-demi yameha ("In the Prime of her Life"); KS III, p.5.  
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- Fr Farenheim; KS VII, p. 321.
- FSS A Fair Stream of Silver; Ann Moray; Longmans, London, 1966.
- Gen Genesis.
- GH Giv'at ha-hol ("Sand Hill"); KS III, p. 351.
- GM The Greek Myths; Robert Graves; Penguin Books, 1969.
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- SYA S.Y. Agnon; D.A. Friedman; S1 42, p. 80.
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